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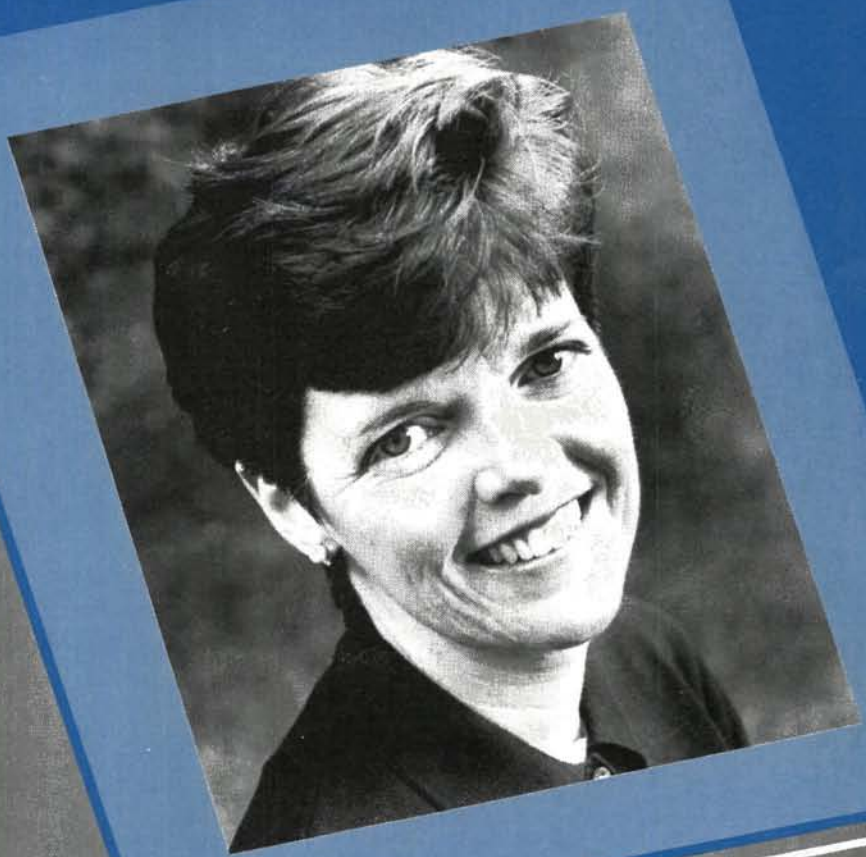

Rand Richards Cooper on the novelist ALICE McDERMOTT

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To the Editors

Dealing sanely with dissent

A million thanks for Father Richard McCormick's article on dissent [February 27], which I have read five times to insure my understanding of it and to incorporate it into my religious education classes.

To institutionalize reasonable and respectful dissent, may I suggest a rediscovery of the pre-Vatican II theories of probabilism, which can be practical rather than juridical guides.

FRANK C. ARRICALE
Bayside, N.Y.

Required reading

Richard McCormick's well-reasoned and carefully documented discussion of the legitimacy and value of dissent within the Catholic church should be required reading in all high school religion and college theology classes. Without the openness to dissent that he advocates, we will all too easily resort to labeling our fellow Catholics and become judgmental and intolerant, thereby driving people of good will away. Let us strive to be a community of believers that respects all its members.

TONY DISTEFANO
Alexandria, Va.

Slings & arrows

Richard McCormick's article recalled the evening last April when, after he lectured in our church, one of the questioners accused him of being "a heretic invited to speak in this Masonic temple!" How unjust and troubling that in today's church similar accusations are often made against faithful and thoughtful persons who dissent because of their moral responsibility as competent Catholics, but who therefore suffer the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." Fortunately, many are vindicated later, and some are even named cardinals; one thinks of Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, Jean Daniélou, and others who suffered because of their theologies before and after Vatican II.

We were proud to welcome Father McCormick as a speaker; thank you for publishing his thought-provoking lecture for others to read.

(REV.) ALDO J. TOS
New York, N.Y.

The writer is pastor of Saint Joseph's Church in Greenwich Village.

Apologize to everybody?

Gordon Marino's "Apologize for Slavery?" [February 13] was the best reflection I have read on the subject. The argument that white Americans should acknowledge the cumulative benefits they have gained because of past discrimination against blacks has merit. But the issue is not a simple one, and gains complexity the closer we look at history and our society.

Consider that blacks who have recently immigrated from Jamaica or Africa tend to shrug off the "emotional baggage" of U.S. blacks; they are more likely to see themselves simply as immigrants, with all the justice issues that immigrants face. Many white Americans recall a family history of discrimination as Irish or some other once-vilified minority. And a growing portion of our population is neither white nor black, but part of an increasingly blended population that has no wish to be categorized on either side of a polarized black/white split.

It can be argued also that an apology plays into the hands of those who would polarize, since emphasizing color works against treating people as individuals.

Moreover, there are many other systematically mistreated groups. If the nation apologizes to blacks, surely we must also apologize to Native Americans, from whom we stole the whole country! And what of women, who as a class have suffered massive denial of rights?

It becomes obvious that this is no simple issue of a wronged group versus a privileged group. Whatever happened in the past, some blacks and some women have become privileged individuals. Others continue to struggle with the consequences of past discrimination. Even though the law and public policy have done much to level the playing field, and even though there is more opportunity for young people today, there are still children who do not have good schools or good role models. There are still children being told, in various ways, that they are not equal because they are black, or female, or immigrants, or whatever. It would seem more beneficial to focus on these current needs, on showing respect for and providing opportunity to every human being in our midst.

JOAN PAHL MORRIS
Gaithersburg, Md.

Apologize? Why?

Gordon Marino's advocacy of some form of collective apology for slavery is ridiculous, one of the dumbest things I've seen in *Commonweal*. Does Marino have no sense of an individual's responsibility for his/her own decisions?

(MRS.) KAY BATTS
Diablo, Calif.

Saddam, Iraq, and us

Many thanks for your editorial on Iraq ["Free Riders," February 27]; I thought it the most lucid commentary I've seen recently on the subject.

It is difficult to overestimate how dangerous the crisis was. With virtually no support from Iraq's neighbors, the U.S. and Britain were clearly set to undertake massive military action amid the most uncertain prospects imaginable for long-term success, and no capability for a ground offensive to achieve even a hope of final resolution.

In my judgment the long-term damage to U.S. interests throughout the Middle East would have been catastrophic. We can only be relieved that Secretary General Kofi Annan was able

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COMMONWEAL

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to negotiate a face-saving agreement that, at the least, buys precious time. We cannot bomb targets in the Middle East without fatal damage to our own position throughout the region. That is just a fact. Until and unless Iraq's neighbors support military action, it is not a reasonable option.

Most of the intelligence community believes we cannot otherwise oust Saddam. That will have to be done by his own people, preferably with the support of other nations in the region. If that is the true object of our policy, as it should be, there are practical steps we should take to improve our influence, while the UN agreement for inspections is still in place.

1. *Ease the sanctions now.* Economic sanctions have caused serious suffering for the civilian population and strengthened Saddam's control. They provide the opportunity for him to demonize moderate opponents in the Arab world as tools of the West, and stifle internal opposition, without weakening his military role. In short, what was always morally dubious is now also counterproductive.

2. *Move more urgently to repair/restore relations with Iran.* Notwithstanding our real issues with the ruling party in Iran, they are, for geopolitical reasons, the natural counterweight to Iraq in the region, and the best hope for containing Hussein's ambitions. There is a clear desire on the part of the Iranian people to come back into the community of nations, and we should take even stronger steps to facilitate this movement.

3. *Reaffirm the Carter Doctrine.* At a previous time of tension, President Jimmy Carter sought to strengthen moderate Arab states in the region by extending American security protection to them. Our interests haven't changed, but we should underscore our intentions not to retreat when and where we have reliable allies there.

Of course there is no certainty that these steps will be successful. In today's world even a superpower must often choose between unappealing alternatives. But the course we've been on is not sustainable. Military action would destabilize every moderate government in the Middle East. We might face decades of global terrorism. And Saddam would likely stay in power.

Finally, another terrible cost would be incurred. I do not believe the American people will long support military action. It won't be like the last time. Far from a grand alliance, most of the world will condemn us. Casualties will be enormous, and this time we won't be able to use the liberation of a captive nation like Kuwait as justification. Dissent will blaze quickly, and our own national unity will be shredded.

We have to try another way.

THOMAS J. HIGGINS
Rosemead, Calif.

The writer was deputy secretary to the Cabinet of President Jimmy Carter.

Wrong solution

I am appalled by your editorial on the Iraq situation. Even your term, "free rider," is too glib for such a serious matter. So your solution is simply to bomb Iraq. Should we also demand Israel to have UN inspection teams there? And should UN inspectors also visit our Nevada test sites? There are no easy solutions.

ANNE DOYLE
Philadelphia, Pa.

Alleva on 'Amistad'

Richard Alleva's review of *Amistad* [February 13] made me wonder if we had seen the same movie. For one thing, he calls Roger Baldwin's efforts as defense lawyer "feeble," though the man was winning the first trial until the judge was removed, and then won the second trial. Why feeble? How feeble?

More surprising is Alleva's statement that Henry Clay is presented as a straightforward villain. If Henry Clay was in the movie at all, I must have blinked at that nanosecond. Does Alleva have Senator Clay mixed up with Martin Van Buren or John C. Calhoun? Both of them were in the film, but neither was presented as a straightforward villain.

MARY HEALEY
Chicago, Ill.

The reviewer replies:

1. To think that I have developed a style so turbid that it completely misleads Ms. Healey, and probably several other readers as well! Let me quote the offending sentence:

"And just in time for Anthony Hopkins (as Adams) to save us from Mathew McConaughey's feeble efforts as the principal defense lawyer (and future governor of Connecticut) Roger Baldwin."

In other words, Anthony Hopkins the *actor* saves us (the *audience*, not the *Amistad* prisoners) from the feeble *artistic* efforts of Mathew McConaughey the *actor*. Not a word is said anywhere in that paragraph (which is entirely concerned with acting) or indeed anywhere in the review about the legal prowess or limitations of Roger Baldwin, whose ghost has suffered insult enough by McConaughey's performance.

2. Oops! When the actor Arliss Howard appears on screen to menace hapless President Van Buren, my ears hear "Calhoun." Two days later, my fingers type "Clay." Still later, I proofread the text while in a fog (which disgruntled readers may claim has drifted into the rest of the review). Still, I stand behind the basic meaning of the passage: A director with a more complex sense of history than Steven Spielberg possesses would have rendered such historical personages as Calhoun (or Roger Baldwin, for that matter) with more complexity. Arliss Howard, a young character actor who has specialized in villains, plays Calhoun with silky vocal delivery and ominous power in a performance more fit for Dr. Hannibal Lecter than for the statesman

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Eggs for sale

Recently the Chinese dissident Harry Wu assisted the police in the arrest of two men in New York City for allegedly offering to sell the kidneys of executed Chinese prisoners for transplant. Responding to those who think it is a "waste" not to use such organs, Wu pointed out that the prisoners, many of whose crimes are "political," cannot give consent. Wu should know; he spent nineteen years in a Chinese prison. "Uncollected body is possible Harry Wu's body," he angrily told the *New York Times*. "Do you want buy this kidney?...Maybe is Harry Wu. ...You don't care? You just want a kidney? A part, body parts for yourself?"

Medicine's marriage to high technology has created novel threats to human dignity. Wu reminds us that in harvesting the organs of the dead to save the living, we can undermine the value of all human life, especially when those organs come with a price tag. Similar threats pervade the highly profitable world of reproductive technology. Medical science now makes it possible for a man to be the biological father of a child whose mother he's never met. And egg donation allows that same child to have three different mothers: genetic, gestational, and social. In these circumstances, "making babies" becomes a depersonalized, even dehumanizing, process to be carefully arranged by contract.

But, of course, who would be so naïve as to imagine that reproductive technology would stop with the altruistic spirit with which medicine first introduced it to infertile couples and justified it to society at large?

Read the *New York Times* front-page headline: "Price Soars for Eggs" (February 25). Under increasing pressure from the demands of the marketplace, human eggs "donated" by some women for fertilization and implantation in other women are now fetching thousands of dollars. Saint Barnabas Medical Center in New Jersey, made front-page news by advertising that it would pay donors $5,000. That doubled the customary rate to compensate for a donor's risk and inconvenience. In many eyes this dramatic escalation in bids crossed the hard-to-define line between offering fair "compensation" for a donor's risk and "enticement." We are on the brink of crude commercial transactions in human eggs. Instinct and history tell us that selling human beings and human organs, even for apparently altruistic motives, is an assault on the integrity of the human person. Still, the wholesale commercialization of egg donation is gaining momentum.

It is illegal in the United States to sell human organs such as kidneys and livers. (Blood and sperm are considered "body parts" and can be sold, although blood banks have striven mightily to encourage voluntary donations of blood, "the gift of life.") Other countries have not been as fastidious as the United States. A robust commercial trade in kidneys exists in India, for example, with the poor providing spare parts for the wealthy. And, as Harry Wu dramatically demonstrated, the organs of prisoners executed in China may soon be marketed worldwide.

The likely exploitation of the poor and the moral taint, even revulsion, associated with the idea of selling human flesh have traditionally fueled strong resistance to the commodification of human life. Now the conundrums thrown up by

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medical science, especially organ transplants and genetic manipulation, combined with notions of unfettered individual choice and self-determination, are eroding even those barriers.

When everything has a price, we are unable to determine the value of anything. Our thinking about human procreation obviously has a profound impact on our attitudes toward children and how we understand what it means to be a human person. Giving technology and commerce such a large role in babymaking will increasingly compel us, legally and in other ways, to think of new life as an object to be manipulated and sold like any other.

For some time, deference to medical professionals and compassion for infertile couples has stayed the hand of regulatory bodies. But it has become clear that at least in the case of some new infertility treatments, physicians are themselves incapable of controlling and restraining their own practices. It is time for the appropriate professional bodies to do it for them. And if medicine can't restrain itself, the federal government or state legislatures should.

Continuing the Conversation

Ladies Last Stepping to the surface of the moon on June 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong radioed a prepared message back to Earth: "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." Father Larry Lorenzoni may now be entitled to paraphrase Armstrong's line; he can say: "One small step for a man, one giant leap for womankind."

As previously noted in this magazine (December 16, 1994), Lorenzoni once had occasion to look up, in quick succession, the names of the superiors general of the Fathers of Mercy, an order with exactly seven members worldwide, and of the Salesian sisters, with nearly 18,000 members. In both cases, he relied on the *Annuario Pontificio*, the Vatican yearbook. The male name was there; the female was not. It wasn't an accident; all the superiors of all the men's orders were there, none of the women superiors. Lorenzoni wrote a piece about it in the Irish *Religious Life Review*, suggesting some of the messages being sent; for example, "Women are of little consequence in the church"; "The father superior of ten men is more important than the mother superior of 10,000 women"; "There's no point in publishing the names of women superiors because who needs to know them."

Fast forward—with all deliberate speed—to today. The *Review* article appeared in 1985. It drew agreement from various Vatican eminences who saw it at the time. In 1994 Archbishop Maurice Couture of Quebec pointed to the *Annuario*'s odd custom as an instance of churchly discrimination against women. And in 1996 (again in 1997) women superiors general acquired names and recognition in the *Annuario*.

One giant leap? Well, the College of Cardinals still has no co-eds.

Of Several Minds

WILLIAM PFAFF

BLOODSHED IN KOSOVO

What can be done?

Consider Kosovo and Iraq. The similarities, and the differences, influenced the response to the Kosovo crisis of the so-called Contact Group in London in early March.

Kosovo, in terms of international law, is a Serbian internal affair. Whatever the violence committed against its Albanian minority, international law and convention limit the intervention of foreign governments to persuasion, or to measures of sanction or boycott that in practice tend to punish the population.

I do not say the innocent population, because the voters of Serbia unquestionably support repression of the movement for Albanian autonomy or independence in Kosovo. There is an immense emotional charge behind their belief that Kosovo, because of Serbia's history, is an inalienable part of Serbia, whoever actually may live there.

The Serbian people had their chance last winter to depose Slobodan Milosevic. But the leaders of the democracy demonstrations, which then seemed so impressive, squandered that opportunity in sterile personal rivalries. Today, they support the Milosevic government against the Contact Group's demands.

In Iraq, where an even more ruthless apparatus of political control exists, no outsider can know what the scale of opposition to Saddam Hussein really is. Shi'ites in the southern half of the country, and the Kurds in the north, resist Baghdad's domination, but that predates the present regime.

By defying the United States last fall, and again last month, the Iraqi dictator has fired national pride and won an increase in permitted oil sales and humanitarian imports. If Saddam Hussein keeps the promises made to Kofi Annan concerning arms inspections, he is within sight of an end to sanctions.

The hysteria which often surrounds discussion of Saddam Hussein obscures the fact that because he has been an international aggressor he has been easier to deal with than Slobodan Milosevic.

Hussein went to war with Iran in 1980, thinking to overthrow the revolutionary government there (and enjoyed tacit American sympathy in doing so, as well as subsequent intelligence and arms help). But when he invaded Kuwait, it was not difficult for the Bush administration to organize an international coali-

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tion to eject Hussein's army.

Slobodan Milosevic is an internal aggressor. He attacks what he portrays as destructive movements inside his country's borders. When his country was Yugoslavia, he tried to prevent secession by Slovenia and Croatia. When Europe recognized those countries' independence, it turned Belgrade's action into international aggression—but did nothing to stop it.

Mr. Milosevic could let Slovenia and Croatia go because his aim was a greater Serbia. It proved unattainable, and he abandoned the Krajina Serb minority in Croatia, and the so-called Republika Srpska in Bosnia. But he cannot now let Kosovo go because it is the focus of Serbian nationalism. His power has from the start rested on the nihilistic exploitation of that nationalism.

What can be done about people like Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein? Europe and the United States contemplate an arms embargo, diplomatic isolation, etc., for Serbia, but Russia resists strong measures. No one dared talk about armed intervention, although the United States once warned of military action should the Kosovo Albanians be attacked. Armed intervention is pointless when, as in Iraq in February, no coherent explanation can be supplied as to how bombing will make a difference to how the despot behaves. As a "lesson," bombing has always proven illusory policy. On the other hand, violence can make a difference when it has a direct effect on what is happening.

If the Serbian authorities do not call off their campaign of militarized police repression in Kosovo, as demanded by the Contact Group, the argument can be made for attacking those forces. They are identifiable military targets and the actual instruments of Milosevic's power. NATO's experience in Bosnia demonstrated that force can change Milosevic's mind. However, this is not going to happen.

The legal objection to interference in other countries' internal affairs has not inhibited the United States in the past, in Central America and Southeast Asia. The United States has threatened to act without renewed UN approval in Iraq.

But the Balkans are another place, and Kosovo's fate is widely, and not unreasonably, thought by Americans to be distant from any American national interest. Military intervention would find little popular support.

The very sensible American initiatives already in place to influence the situation in Kosovo—a big and visible U.S. information operation, U.S. troops stationed in Macedonia, active diplomacy in Belgrade — have been possible because practically no one in Washington noticed them.

Europe's reaction to the situation is depressingly familiar. There is exactly the same stalemate that prevented constructive and collective European action when the old Yugoslavia came apart.

There is nonetheless some reason to think that Milosevic will back off. He takes calculated risks, and the downside of what he has done this time is considerable. He seems to have mistakenly assumed that the United States, and therefore Europe, would ignore renewed repression in Kosovo. However, his career has rested on provoking nationalism and creating wars. This time he may have started something he cannot, or will not, stop, and which the international community is unwilling to stop. □

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OF SEVERAL MINDS

JOHN GARVEY

HOW IS THE BIBLE TRUE?

Between history & metaphor

In a good op-ed page piece in the *New York Times* (February 26), Joyce Carol Oates makes a statement with which I have to disagree, at least in part: "The truth of one era becomes, as if by an artist's sleight of hand, the mythology of subsequent eras. What was sacred becomes secular. Our impassioned ancestors must have intended books like the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament to be historical documents, bearing the literal truth, not the metaphorical truth they embody today."

I am not sure that this is true—or it is at least not nearly so simple. For example, when the church compiled the New Testament it knowingly included some contradictory accounts. (The church determined which biblical books would be considered canonical largely in reaction to Marcion, who wanted to exclude all of the Old Testament and much of what we regard as the New Testament.) The genealogies of Christ offered by Matthew and Luke, for example, are different; the chronologies of John and the synoptic Gospels differ, and these and other differences (how many angels were at the tomb after the Resurrection, and what did they say?) were noted early on.

The compilers of the Hebrew Bible also had no problem with contradiction: the two creation accounts in Genesis differ, to take only one example. And you can read Jonah as a wonderful (and funny) fable, and the account of the three young men in the fiery furnace, in Daniel, was plainly something to be recited aloud. The episode in Daniel may or may not have had its roots in some royal wickedness, but it is so charged, as something to be recited, that you have to see that something more than history is involved here. And what could history have to do with the Song of Songs?

My problem is not with the idea that our ancestors may have had a different approach to these things than we do, nor do I deny that they may have thought Jonah was really swallowed by a huge fish. My problem is with the too simple distinction between "literal truth" and "metaphorical truth." Our modern idea of history is relatively recent, and limited: just the facts, please. A radical

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cleavage is made between the idea of the objective and the subjective. One of the points Oates wanted to make in her piece is that it isn't that simple, and she is right. But was the Bible ever intended primarily as "history" or "literal truth," and can this be separated from "metaphorical truth"?

When Jesus spoke of the prodigal son and his merciful father, or of the Pharisee and the tax collector, he was telling stories. Not even a fundamentalist would deny that there was no historical prodigal son—but Jesus says, "There was a man who had two sons...." Was he lying about history? What if Jesus himself never said it, but this was Luke's way of getting across part of Jesus' teaching? The point here is not history. What we have to see is that the prodigal son and his merciful father are, in a way we must learn to understand or miss the point of Christianity, more real than (say) Warren Harding or the Teapot Dome scandal. There are truths that are historical, and more than historical; and there are truths that can be expressed metaphorically, but they are more than metaphors. Facts and history do not exhaust reality, and metaphors either point to something true or they do not. An elegant and aesthetically pleasing metaphor may be dead wrong, and a homely one right on target.

This has to do, finally, with recovering a way of understanding that we have lost. This could be the most important meaning of tradition, which means "what is handed on." Origen knew that Paul did not write the Epistle to the Hebrews, but he knew that what mattered was the text, not the author. Matthew has Jesus speak from a mountain (to be like Moses); Luke puts his different version of the same set of teachings on a plain. What matters is what is said: love your enemies, forgive one another as God has forgiven you. The rest really is distraction, because the more you hang around these words, the more you can see the consistency and understand that the different nuances also instruct, like midrash. In one commentary on the Exodus, the angels who rejoice when the troops of Pharoah are drowned are told to be silent by God: "How dare you rejoice when my creatures, the Egyptians, are dying?" The point is not to add new history to old history, or to claim that the Exodus account is deficient as history. We are talking about something more than history here.

This approach to what we read and what we hear has always been part of biblical understanding. Next to this richness, a distinction between literal and metaphorical truth seems pretty thin. And because of the limitations of our own mindset, we can run the danger of saying that if it isn't "fact" or historical, it must be "merely" metaphorical. What we have to understand is that something as real as the Resurrection—which I believe truly happened—cannot be confined by history, which is only our account of things. There is a reality beyond our accounting, and we need a language richer than the language of history to begin to get at it. □

John Shekelton

LIFT HIGH THE CROSS

Joining the Savior on Good Friday

I went to Good Friday services last year on a cloudy afternoon. I was surprised that the brooding, city-wide atmosphere had sifted into the vast space of the Basilica of Saint Mary in Minneapolis. I was so used to the Sunday joy of the place, the grace of the marble statuary, the excitement of the congregation, and the radiance of the stained glass windows on a sunny morning—bright like a summer garden.

This day was different. The faithful trudged in, hunkered down, kept their coats on. There was quiet.

The service began with a processional measured by a pulse of kettle drums. The ministers and choir, most robed in white, walked throughout the church, some feathering incense into the air. A liturgist friend whispered into my ear about imperial Rome. Precisely. I was on edge.

The Passion was sung by choir and cantors. The part of Jesus was sung by a young man. As he sang I heard another voice in my mind. I have a 1960 recording of the Passion from the Abbey of Saint Pierre de Solesmes in which an elder of the community sings the part of Jesus. I heard again the solemn, heavy sound of the old man's song. I wondered if years of prayer and contemplation had intensified the core of him. It was not the beauty of the old monk's voice that haunted me, although his singing was fine. He still had a mild tremolo, and I heard the words of Jesus vibrating as if they were sung for the first time with an exhausted emotion. *Quem queritis?* Whom do you seek?

Is this not an essential question of our Western, psychological religion? Life is a drama of personalities, relationships, insights, and denouements.

After the singing of the Passion, the ministers moved back into the center of the church where there hung a tall, simple plank cross. They lowered the cross from the ceiling and detached it from its metal fixtures. The ministers were bringing the cross down so they could pass it over the congregation—literally. At each of the four quadrants of pews, they sent the cross above the crowd, individual congregants keeping it aloft and moving it along with their arms. The visual effect was like the movement of a centipede turned upside down.

As the ministers carried the cross to our quadrant, I noticed an old woman in a faded blue-cloth coat two pews ahead and to my left. She had turned around to look back with the rest of us as the cross bearers approached our section. I watched her position her feet on the ground, attempting to find her balance, I supposed. When the cross approached, buoyant and alive—even dangerous—she raised her veined hands high, cupping them slightly, sig-

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naling, it seemed, that she was ready to bear the whole weight of the cross as it passed over.

As the cross passed near me, I leaned over, not so much to support it as to touch it. When I touched it I thought of all that was wrong in my life, and tears began to form in my winter-weary eyes. I looked around at others. I saw an HIV positive man I know hold up the cross. I wondered how many burdens other people around me had raised up, lifting high their own crosses as the cross of Jesus passed over. Was the dark-haired woman in the chic white coat battling cancer? Was the black man next to me tired of racism and cultural segregation? Was that one alone? That one hungry? That one out of work? Or did people raise up their strengths, their willingness to help, their confidence, their love?

Whenever I had heard the phrase "lift high the cross," I had imagined the upright beam of the cross pointing to heaven, held high as a beacon or banner to guide the crowd or as a sign of victory, something that Constantine would have understood. I have a new image now. It is an exalted cross, although it lies flat out. It is energized by many hands, a piece of wood floating over a sea of regrets, fears, sadness, faith, hope, and courage. It draws out emotions and returns a balm.

At the beginning of the adoration of the cross, the congregation sang the Taizé chant: "Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom." It's a simple chant on a couple of notes with a little walk up and down at the ends and middle of the line. After the fourth repetition, I started to hear harmonies. I heard good singers adding intricacies to the tune. I remembered Taizé which I had visited as a young man. I had been amazed then how harmony warmed up the air when the people sang. I wondered how they knew the craft of it. It was natural to them, I guess, like grapes on their hills or sheep in their fields. I remembered seeing Roger Schutz, the founder of Taizé , at the end of vespers. I passed by him, only several feet separating us. He was greeting someone, but I looked at him closely. I remember his eyes being dark and luminous at the same time. His eyes sang as eloquently as the old monk's voice.

In front of us in Minneapolis sat a small family—father, mother, ten-year-old son. The mother was lean and attractive. The father, like so many Americans, bore too much weight for his frame. The son was quiet through most of the service. Halfway through the singing of the Taizé chant, the mother leaned forward slightly. Was she crying? "Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom." The son turned to look at her. He stretched his thin arm across her shoulder. His reach could not encircle her. His arm was too short.

It struck me that most of us were there on Good Friday, saddened that our arms cannot embrace everything we experience or make whole what is broken. There is not enough of us, yet there is so much of reality. Our hopes are without horizon yet our lives are severely limited and our understanding clouded. Like Jesus, we suffer. And on Good Friday we celebrate that mysterious link between us and the dying Christ.

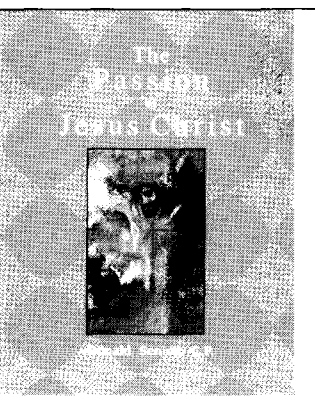
Toward the end of the adoration of the cross, a middle-aged woman in a worn wheelchair, her head wrapped in something white, rolled up to join the end of the line. Was this a protest? The tall cross was up next to the old altar, held up by two white-robed ministers. There were at least six steps leading to it. I think the usher who was at the rear of the line of adorers had the same fear as I. He leaned over to speak to the woman in the wheelchair, gesturing over to the side. Perhaps there was a ramp up to the altar hidden at the back. She shook her head and stayed in line. The young man followed along with her as she rolled forward.

When she reached the foot of the sanctuary, I wondered if the red-garbed priest might have the cross brought down to her. Or would she raise her voice and make some commentary about handicap access?

Nothing so dramatic occurred. After reaching the foot of the sanctuary, the woman set the wheelchair's brakes and slowly lifted herself out of the chair. Two ushers held her by both arms, and the three of them carefully ascended the steps. At the cross she bent down as the rest of us did to kiss the shiny wood, one man at each arm supporting her.

Lift high the cross. □

John Shekelton *lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota.*



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CHARMING ALICE

A unique voice in American fiction

Rand Richards Cooper

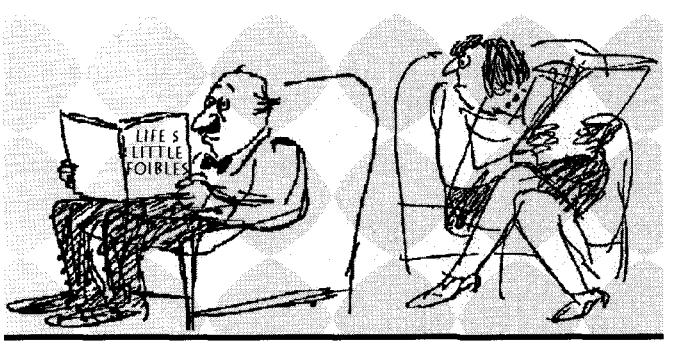
One of the pleasures of going back to a talented writer's early work is finding the promising failure, the intriguingly bad book.

Alice McDermott's first novel, *A Bigamist's Daughter* (1982), told the story of a Manhattan vanity press editor romantically involved with one of her luckless writers. Burdened with backstory, plot contrivances, and stilted dialogue ("Some love goes even beyond the lover himself.... Love that's like a spiritual life, like pure faith...."), the novel was a classic case of a writer fighting her own strengths. It was bad in the way some clothing is bad: it just didn't fit. Bent on a single point-of-view protagonist, McDermott restrained a powerful storytelling impulse and ended up making her characters speak her own themes. She used awkward plot moves to steer the novel toward what she really wanted to write about, namely, not her heroine's present but her past—a child's perception of the physical world and the stubborn mysteries of adulthood. *A Bigamist's Daughter* was ostensibly a smart '80s novel about a woman finding her strength. But trapped inside it was very different book, less breezy and ironic, more lyrical and backward-looking, and far less narratively conventional.

McDermott's subsequent career has been a matter of setting this trapped book free. *That Night* (1987), a sparkling, swooning evocation of a lost era, related the events of a summer evening in a 1960s Long Island suburb, when a gang of hot-rodding town toughs, attempting to steal away their leader's girlfriend, does battle with the fathers of the neighborhood. The story is told, retrospectively, by a nameless narrator who watched the rumble as a ten-year-old, and whose own adult identity is subordinated to her role as witness to the past—in effect, a stand-in omniscient narrator, telling the story and its ramifications from all angles. The close focus on one event enabled McDermott to range widely through time, and in and out of the various characters as well, creating the novel's blend of tight control with lyrical expansiveness, and giving vent to a sensibility at once rapturous and haunted.

If *That Night* discovered its author's preoccupations— memory and the world of the child, the character of community, the power of desire, the evanescence and permanence of time, the ironies of fate—*At Weddings and Wakes* (1992) pushed them further. The novel studies an Irish-Catholic family in New York, circa 1960, through the eyes of two girls and a boy brought on weekly visits from their home on Long Island to their grandmother's apartment in Brooklyn, where through endless afternoons the children's mother and three aunts pour out decades of pent-up disappointments, hopes, and recriminations. Though the fate of one of the aunts figures as a recurring fugue theme, the novel is less plotted than painted. The coffee table with its doily, plastic flowers, and dish of sugared almonds; the family photographs; everything draped and dim and airless, and from the next room the muffled sound of someone sobbing: it is an achingly detailed tableau of lace-curtain Irish despair.

At Weddings and Wakes is the only novel I can think of told from a third-person-plural point of view, a narrative built on "The children saw..." and "To the younger girl it seemed that...." Yet the children's individual identities are strangely blurred; we barely learn their names, and other than a few parenthetical asides which sweep us decades ahead, we get no glimpse of their subsequent, adult lives and selves. This too is an extension of an impulse already evident in *That Night.* Indeed, an odd disjunction between the extravagant detail of her descriptive writing and an unwillingness to individuate the point-of-view character has figured increasingly as a hallmark of McDermott's style. Reading *At Weddings and Wakes* is a bit like being carried to a window on the shoulders of anonymous porters. Inside is a world where wedding-party bands play "Galway Bay" as men tell stories of Gentleman Jimmy Walker or a voice calls out "Sweet Jesus, don't mention Parnell!"; where children are taught the lives of the saints by nuns with names like Sister Illuminata. *At Weddings and Wakes* took the lyrical sadness of *That Night* and joined it to something like ethnography. Written in a lovely prose that quivers at the brink of sentimentality—this is a writer who can make even a door, "easing itself closed with what sound-



Rand Richards Cooper *is a frequent* Commonweal *contributor. His most recent book, a collection of short stories, is* Big as Life *(Dial).*

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Books discussed in this essay

Charming Billy
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $22, 280 pp.
A Bigamist's Daughter
Harper-Perennial, $7.95, 281 pp.
That Night
Harper-Perennial, $6.95, 184 pp.
At Weddings and Wakes
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $19, 213 pp.

ed like three short sorrowful expirations of breath," seem wistful—it is a nostalgic and immaculately detailed valedictory to a vanishing corner of Irish Catholicism.

McDermott's new novel, *Charming Billy*, is her most challenging to date—incorrigibly digressive, brash with time, intricately layered and crammed full of life. Set in 1983, *Charming Billy* focuses on three days following the funeral of Billy Lynch, WWII veteran, longtime employee of Con Edison, and lifelong resident of Irish-Catholic New York (Queens, to be exact). Through the reminiscences of family and friends we meet an incurable romantic who drank himself to death at sixty: a Billy who charms older ladies in restaurants; calms a woman's baby by murmuring Yeats's "Down by the Salley Gardens"; writes notes on napkins to send to the priest; calls his cousin and best friend, Dennis, in the middle of the night to rail drunkenly against death and the passing of all things. It is a rousing, tender rendition of that stock Irish figure, the poetic rogue in love with his sorrows. Is that a breviary in Billy's jacket pocket, or a flask?

Behind his sorrow lies a tale of deception and lost love. McDermott takes us to Long Island in the summer of 1945, where Billy meets and courts a young Irish nanny named Eva. Back in Ireland, she agrees to marry him, accepts the money he saves to send for her passage—and then is heard from no more. Through a go-between Dennis uncovers the banal truth (Eva has married another man and used the $500 to open a gas station), but tells Billy instead she died of pneumonia. The impulsive lie inaugurates Billy's decades of grieving devotion to her memory—he eventually marries, but stays true in his heart to Eva—and places in the novel's foreground the proposition that a life of deluded passion is better than one of clear-eyed disillusion.

Critics have likened McDermott to Joyce; but there's also a lot of F. Scott Fitzgerald in this novel—Billy an Irish workingman's Gatsby, Eva his Daisy, and Ireland itself, perhaps, the green light over the water. Like Gatsby, Billy conflates romance with poetry; kissing Eva on the beach in 1945 he feels, McDermott writes, "a desire for life itself to be as sweet as certain words could make it seem...." But McDermott frames Billy's life story in ironies, stinting neither the cost nor the complexity of his romanticism. First there are the ravages of alcohol and its punishing toll on the body: the downside of poetry is, literally, morbidity. Then there's the fact that Billy's tragedy is founded on a lie. And for whose benefit? His goodness of heart gets soaked up by friends and relatives whose hurting he does for them: he loves and loses; he keeps the faith.

The Christian echo of a redemptive, sacrificial quality to Billy's passion could be heavy-handed. But McDermott guards against bathos by making those mourners who explicitly construe Billy as a Christ figure *themselves* seem heavy-handed. Still, those who dismiss Billy's suffering as the "genetic disease" of alcoholism—there's an Uncle Ted, an evangelical AA member—come off as pinched and zealous proponents of our era's mistaken urge to collapse tragedy into (mere) pathology: a reductively pragmatic approach, McDermott clearly believes, to the mysteries of human existence.

Charming Billy is a stealthily ambitious work of fiction. Under the cover of a realist's reverence for descriptive detail and a romance writer's duty to affairs of the heart, McDermott conducts surprising experiments in form and voice. At times she's content simply to sit her characters around a table and quote speaker after speaker, or to compress their talk into a group monologue of page-spanning paragraphs that reads like an unedited transcript. Elsewhere, her narrator steps forward with pronouncements that have a Jane Austen-like ring: "In the arc of an unremarkable life, a life whose triumphs are small and personal, whose trials are ordinary enough, as tempered in their pain as in their resolution of pain, the claim of exclusivity in love requires both a certain kind of courage and a good dose of delusion." An elegiac impulse plays freely with her sentences, lending a curious, huffing quality:

> He had, at some point, ripped apart, plowed through, as alcoholics tend to do, the great deep, tightly woven fabric of affection that was some part of the emotional life, the life of love, of everyone in the room.
>
> How lonely they all seemed to me that night, my father's family and friends, lonely souls every one of them, despite husbands and children and cousins and friends, all their hopes, in the end, their pairings and procreation and their keeping in touch, keeping track, futile in the end, failing in the end to keep them from seeing that nothing they felt, in the end, has made any difference.

There's a fine line between the exquisite and the laborious, and such writing risks becoming a parody of lyricism. There's something almost willful in the baroque extravagance of McDermott's style. It's as if she feels her previous books haven't gone far enough, that this time she's determined not merely to write *about* loss, but to take it down into the basic structures of the novel itself, fashioning a syntax of melancholy, a prose that gasps with sadness and doubles back on itself like the tangled contingencies of fate.

So too with the profusion of characters and their stories. *Charming Billy* seems wildly discursive, chronicling not mere-

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ly the principal players in Billy's life, but much of the large supporting cast as well. You may find yourself flipping back to check which Daniel Lynch this is (there are two) or whose Uncle Jim worked at Edison back in '37; or wondering how you got onto the story of Billy's cousin's mother's Great-Aunty Eileen. Who *are* all these people? Again, McDermott isn't content merely to describe a texture of consciousness; she wants to create it, taking the density of Irish Catholic working-class family life and pressing it into the very molecules of the novel. It's as if the welter of names and stories—or rather our resistance to it—reveals our own attenuated capacity for family life. Reading *Charming Billy* one feels at times something like the strangeness, the scratchy bewilderment, of things perceived across a cultural divide.

Which brings us, finally, to the narrator. *Charming Billy* is told by the daughter of Billy's cousin Dennis, but through much of the novel you'd hardly notice it. She's a rather ghostly presence, never named, often present in the room but listening far more than talking. Only in the margins of the story do we get the skimpiest hints at her own life: a college graduate, married, living in Seattle with her children and husband. Readers of McDermott's last two books, recognizing yet another version of the trademark stealth narrator, may wonder, why not simply dispense with her altogether? Why bother to bring the narrator in as an actual character if you're not going to fill her out? It would be easy enough to toss the crutch aside and let an omniscient narrator take the slow drift back through the decades of Billy's life.

But there's a reason for the elusive, anonymous quality of McDermott's narrators. Third-generation Irish-Americans situated at the end of a progression that goes urban New York, suburban Long Island, Somewhere Else, they stand looking back through the one-way window of assimilation at the lives their parents and grandparents lived. It is a crowded picture, replete with emblems of a no-frills urban Irish Catholicism: a funeral party over roast beef and boiled potatoes; characters with names like Mickey Quinn or Bridie "from the old neighborhood" (famous for her pound cake, made with a full pound of butter); men who stop after work at Quinlan's for a quick drink before Friday Mass and who call their wives "Mama"; apartment living rooms where the brocade sofa with its plastic slipcovers stands beneath a framed copy of the Irish Blessing as a new widow sobs in grief, and the Monsignor, stopping to offer solace, is welcomed with awe and deference, like a movie star.

For better and for worse, this is the life of ethnic and religious community—loud, close-knit, restrictive. And it is a life McDermott's point-of-view characters have left behind. In *Charming Billy* the narrator's few comments about herself make clear who she is: "I married Matt and we headed off to Seattle. Lives of our own, we said. Self-sacrifice having been recognized as a delusion by then, not a virtue. Self-consciousness more the vogue."

Lives of our own, we said. The mildly deprecating irony McDermott reserves for what might be called post-Irish life suggests ambivalence about the trade-offs that come with breaking free of one's roots. Yes, things are gained: mobility, a change of scenery, freedom—including sexual freedom—education and professional status, and so on. But much gets lost. To shrug off the burdens of group identity is also to shrug off ferocious attachments; and McDermott's novels express doubt about whether, as ties attenuate and the old neighborhood sinks further into the past, anything as vivid and nourishing will take their place. The grand struggle to wrest one's self from the group delivers her protagonists to this deeply American paradox: that getting a life of your own brings a diminished sense of who you are. Hence the ghostly narrators. *Charming Billy* bids farewell both to Billy and to his entire way of life, its nameless narrator sent back to inspect a world where everyone owned a piece of you from one where identity rests on the still more perilous ground of self-discovery. Who *is* this person looking back with such regret and longing? □

The Orange

(from the prison drawings of Breyten Bretenbach)

An orange, four times,
in grey pencil:

whole,
partly peeled,
almost entirely eaten,
gone.

Where do these sketches
begin or end—

with the orange's heft and shine,
the concentrated weight
of its earthly shape,

or with the invisible likeness
left behind in empty air,

the orange become
pure possibility?

A history
of changed perspectives
in grey pencil,

his mind drawing
strength and satisfaction
from diminishments.

And yet how difficult,
clearly, the parting—

each section sticky with life,
the orange's inconceivable loss
finally attained.

Robert Cording

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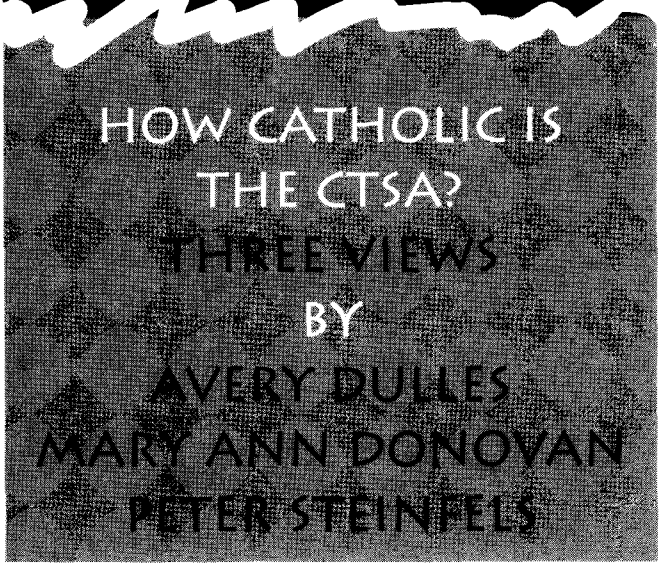

AVERY DULLES

In June 1997, Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston aroused great indignation by writing that the Catholic Theological Society of America "has become an association of advocacy for theological dissent" and, in fact, "a wasteland."

To assess the validity of this characterization one has only to peruse the recent volumes of the *CTSA Proceedings*. The latest volume, based on the 1997 convention, is a show-case example. The convention theme, "The Eucharist for the Twenty-First Century," might be regarded as a promising Catholic enterprise. But the outcome belied the promise. The convention speakers mounted a series of attacks on Catholic doctrine more radical, it would seem, than the challenges issued by Luther and Calvin.

Most notoriously, the convention put itself on record as collectively opposing the irrevocable character of the teaching that the church has no authority to ordain women. The conclusions of a committee report to this effect were endorsed by a landslide vote of 216 Yes, 22 No, and 10 abstentions. The vote was widely, and I believe correctly, interpreted as a dissent not only from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's declaration on the subject but also from the pope's call for definitive adherence to his teaching.

The theological dissent, however, runs far deeper, as the convention addresses demonstrate. In an orchestrated chorus they rejected fundamental articles of Catholic belief regarding priesthood and Eucharist as expressed by the Council of Trent, the Second Vatican Council, the synods of bishops, Paul VI, John Paul II, and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Some examples may here be given.

One speaker lamented what he described as the "ideological misuse" of the imagery of Christ as Bridegroom and the importance of the maleness of Christ. The idea that the priest-celebrant acts *in persona Christi* was repeatedly assailed. The debate "about in whose *persona* the priest acts in the Eucharist," one speaker sarcastically declared, is of interest "primarily as a disputational exercise, yielding occasional experiences of theological 'Gotcha.'"

Speaker after speaker rose to proclaim that the Eucharist is accomplished not by the priest-celebrant but by the whole assembly. It is clearly established, according to one, that the baptized, rather than the ordained, are "the effective human subjects of the church's liturgy." The particular liturgical assembly works as a collective subject invoking the *memoria Christi* by the power of the Holy Spirit. The priest, said another speaker, simply leads the assembly in prayer and action on the basis of his or her qualities of leadership. In the "new paradigm" for sacramental ministry, leadership depends not on a particular state in life or gender but on "demonstrated abilities or charisms."

No special importance is ascribed to the words of institution, recited by the celebrant. Sacramental theology, we are informed, "needs to question the very notion of a consecratory formula." The doctrine of *ex opere operato* needs to be reinterpreted to mean not "arbitrary rubrics" but explicit acknowledgment of the power of God and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. In his delivery, I am told, the speaker commented that "validity is a small concern." Too small?

In American Catholicism today, said another speaker, "parishioners are no longer distinguishing between those rituals performed by the permanently ordained clergy and those rituals performed by laity." "Despite the protests of the magisterium," he contended, the difference between permanent and temporary forms of ordination is being "minimized."

Notwithstanding the prohibitions repeatedly issued by church authorities, the speakers at this convention did not shy away from advocating the celebration of the Eucharist without an ordained priest. Current Roman Catholic directives regarding Communion services in the absence of a priest are flawed, said one theologian, because they misconceive the Eucharist as the work of a single ordained minister. Unordained leaders can perform truly eucharistic actions. When a priest is present, the whole assembly should join in the posture and gestures of the priest, even at the recitation of the institution narrative.

At a workshop on "women and the Eucharist," a priest who meekly asked about how he could better respond to the sensitivities of women religious was sharply reminded that "priests may not be as central to the liturgy as some perceive themselves to be." Another participant issued an open invitation for members to participate in a "critical Mass" at which un-

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ordained women would preside. Acts of "public ritual transgression," said still another, are a desirable tactic to "crack open" the meaning of the Eucharist.

The convention, taken in general, was as vigorous as any sixteenth-century Reformer in seeking to banish the ideas of ordained priesthood and sacrifice, neither of which, in the judgment of several speakers, should be seen as anything more than metaphorical. These views were set forth with a certain display of historical erudition, as though doctrines could be invalidated by tagging them chronologically. The sacerdotalized vocabulary of the Christian church, said one speaker, was a problematic development of the third century, when the concept of Christian priesthood began to be taken literally rather than metaphorically. The medieval Scholastics were castigated by another speaker for having promoted the idea of sacrifice as a vehicle for concentrating the liturgy on the cultic action of the ordained minister. Still another observed that Thomas Aquinas, with his views on transubstantiation, was "an idiosyncratic voice in thirteenth-century eucharistic theology and by the end of that century, a voice which ceased to convince." Ritual ordination, one speaker remarked, was not specifically linked with consecration in official church teaching until 1215. A historical work was footnoted to prove that only in the fifteenth century did the church begin to teach officially "that order is a sacrament which is permanently effective and 'imprints character.'"

In our day—it would seem—we are liberated from all these illusions. We can shift the focus away from the cultic actions and concentrate rather on what one speaker strangely called "the eucharistic experience of Jesus." A woman psychiatrist was cited as a witness to the sad plight of those Catholics, clergy and laity alike, for whom the "traditional" liturgical practice and doctrine "served positively as a mediating 'transitional object' connecting them with the divine mystery."

In a workshop on "Sunday with Campus Ministry but without a Priest" the audience was regaled with an account of how two lay persons replaced an ordained priest at a regular Sunday worship service. The speaker, alluding to James Fowler's stages-of-faith development, made a rather revealing comment. He spoke of "the movement from the synthetic conventional faith to the individuative reflective faith." The terminology speaks volumes. It insinuates that adherence to the Catholic tradition and to the teaching of the church can only be conventional and unreflective. Significant too is the reference to "individuation." Reflective faith, it would seem, must arise from individual creativity rather than from participation in the faith of the church.

My own conclusion (not, I hope, a purely individual or unreflective one!) is that the 1997 convention of the CTSA confirms the presence of severe fault lines in contemporary American Catholicism, especially in the theological community. The CTSA, apparently driven by an urge for theological self-assertion against hierarchical authority, widens the gap and constitutes a kind of alternative magisterium for dissatisfied Catholics. It tends to impose an orthodoxy of its own. Graduate students who hope to find university teaching positions, and younger faculty seeking promotion and tenure, feel almost compelled to attend the CTSA and to refrain from vocal criticism.

Theologians are faced with a drastic choice: whether to follow the directions represented by the CTSA or to adhere to the tradition as taught by the popes and councils. Church authorities are faced with a similar choice. Can they recognize the CTSA as Catholic? Can anything be done to clarify or restore its Catholic character? Or must some new theological agency, more committed to Catholic principles, be established?

Sound and responsible statements can surely be found in the *1997 Proceedings*, but they are difficult to come by in the major addresses on the convention theme. While my own reading is quite negative, I am anxious to hear from others whether they can make the case for a more favorable reading of the volume.

Avery Dulles, S.J., *holds the Laurence J. McGinley Chair of Religion and Society at Fordham University.*

MARY ANN DONOVAN

Father Avery Dulles has leveled extremely grave charges at the Catholic Theological Society of America. I regret that he was not in attendance at the convention he censures so heavily. If he had been present he could have perceived how mistaken are the terms he uses to establish attitudes: for example, one speaker "sarcastically" declared, the priest who spoke "meekly" was "sharply" reminded, the chorus was "orchestrated." Neither the meetings nor the text of the *Proceedings* justifies his division of the participants into the sincere and the sneering. Many of us who have admired Avery Dulles can only ask what could have led this eminent theologian to adopt so hostile an attitude toward the CTSA and to offer so misleading an interpretation of its 1997 convention.

His first charge, that "the convention put itself on record as collectively opposing the irrevocable character of the teaching that the church has no authority to ordain women," misreads the resolution adopted by the society. Its text is: " (1) There are serious doubts regarding the nature of the authority of this teaching and its grounds in Tradition. (2) There is serious, widespread disagreement on this question not only among theologians, but also within the larger community of the church. (3) Once again, it seems clear, therefore, that further study, discussion, and prayer regarding this question by all the members of the church in accord with their particular gifts and vocations are necessary if the church is to be guided by the Spirit in remaining faithful to the authentic Tradition of the church in our day."

Sentences 1 and 2 do not "collectively oppose" anything. They simply state two facts: there are serious doubts about what kind of authority this doctrine has and these doubts exist among theologians and others throughout the church. Consequently, states sentence 3, the members of the church should give this matter further study, discussion, and prayer. The

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resolution endorsed by the CTSA states two facts and a consequence that is reasonably drawn from them. I strongly disagree with anyone who chooses to interpret the approval of this resolution as an act of dissent. This resolution was *not* asserted *against* the magisterium; it was *submitted to* the episcopal conferences of the United States and Canada. Theologians are expected to make difficulties clear to the magisterium. Doing so is part of their work.

Father Dulles has accused the speakers at the 1997 convention of rejecting "fundamental articles of Catholic belief regarding priesthood and Eucharist." Presumably he bases this charge on the various places in the *Proceedings* to which he then refers. The following comparison between what Dulles has written and what the speakers at the convention actually said, will, I believe, suffice to show that he has not offered a fair and objective presentation of what was said.

Dulles: "One speaker lamented what he described as the 'ideological misuse' of the imagery of Christ as Bridegroom and the importance of the maleness of Christ."

What was said: "Taking a useful metaphor like Bridegroom from the tradition and raising it to a principle of theology is dangerous business, for it fails to respect the genre in which the metaphor has been proposed and runs the risk of ideological misuse."

Dulles: "The idea that the priest-celebrant acts *in persona Christi* was repeatedly assailed."

What was said: In fact none of the speakers "assailed the idea." Dulles seems to have found an example of this in the passage to which he then refers:

Dulles: "The debate 'about in whose *persona* the priest acts in the Eucharist,' one speaker sarcastically declared, is of interest 'primarily as a disputational exercise, yielding occasional experiences of theological "Gotcha."'"

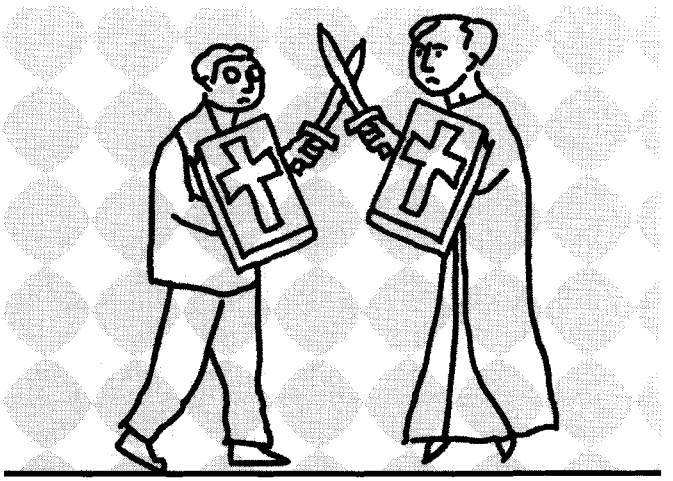
What was said: Whether this was said "sarcastically" is for those who were at the convention to judge. That the speaker was not "assailing the idea that the priest-celebrant acts *in persona Christi*" is clear from her next sentence, which gives her reasons for judging that dispute to be of minor importance: "Why? The premise of the debate is that the priest is the sole effective human subject of liturgical action, and that premise itself is no longer tenable."

Dulles: "Speaker after speaker rose to proclaim that the Eucharist is accomplished not by the priest-celebrant but by the whole assembly."

What was said: None of the speakers said that the Eucharist is not accomplished by the priest-celebrant. Rather, they rightly insisted that the Eucharist is offered by the whole assembly, and not *only* by the priest-celebrant.

Dulles: "It is clearly established, according to one, that the baptized, rather than the ordained, are the 'effective human subjects of the church's liturgy.'"

What was said: "*Sacrosanctum concilium* (par. 14) had mandated, 'In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, *the full and active participation by all the people* is the aim to be considered above all else....' In this statement, the baptized are clearly identified as the effective human subjects of the



church's liturgy."

It is obvious that neither "all the people" nor "the baptized" excludes the ordained. There is no justification for Dulles inserting the phrase "rather than the ordained," as in another place he inserts the phrase "or her" where it is absent from the text.

Dulles: "No special importance is ascribed to the words of institution, recited by the celebrant. Sacramental theology, we are informed, 'needs to question the very notion of a consecratory formula.'"

What was said: "As I hope to argue in the third part of this essay...a sacramental theology from below, as well as a sacramental theology that depends upon a close reading of the rites and their history, needs to question the very notion of a consecratory formula."

The speaker devotes seven pages to detailed argument. Historical analysis leads him to write that what is needed, rather than the scholastic emphasis on the moment of consecration, is emphasis on the *epiclesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit so central to Eastern theology. So he concludes: "Thus Eastern theology has been on surer ground in pointing to the *epiclesis* as a moment of consecration, although limiting the notion of consecration to one moment is not necessary given my theory about the entire shape and content of the eucharistic action."

Dulles: "The speakers at this convention did not shy away from advocating the celebration of the Eucharist without an ordained priest."

What was said: The simple fact is that none of the three convention speakers advocated the celebration of the Eucharist without an ordained priest. What they did advocate is the full realization and implementation of the truth that the Eucharist is celebrated by the whole gathered people of God, and not by the priest alone.

It is not possible in the space allowed to respond to each one of Dulles's accusations. I am convinced that anyone who reads the *Proceedings* and compares Dulles's critique with what was actually said, will agree that there is no real justification for his accusing the convention speakers of mounting "a series of attacks on Catholic doctrine" or of rejecting "fun-

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damental articles of Catholic belief regarding priesthood and Eucharist."

Much of the historical work presented by speakers is dismissed by Dulles's judgment: "These views were set forth with a certain display of historical erudition, as though doctrines could be invalidated by tagging them chronologically." He does not address the work seriously on its own terms and interprets the purpose of historical exposition as invalidating doctrines. One must then ask what is the theological significance of earlier practices, teachings, or beliefs? Critical history leads to the interpretation of doctrinal developments in a contextualized fashion. It is true that the vocabulary of "priesthood" began to be taken seriously in its application to Christian leadership in the third century. To affirm this is not to attack the priesthood. It is true that in his own day Thomas Aquinas and his teaching on transubstantiation were not given great weight. To affirm this is not to deny real presence. The first evidence currently available to link ordination and consecration in official church teaching is in 1215; in ending this section the speaker says "much more research is needed before any firm conclusions can be reached...." Here we have an area clearly identified as needing study. To adduce historical evidence for earlier stages of doctrinal development is not to attack doctrine. If Dulles holds this to be the case, he must establish it.

According to Dulles, the CTSA wishes to set itself up as a "kind of alternative magisterium." I can assure him that this is not its intention. The CTSA simply wishes to perform the service proper to members of the Catholic theological community. As the history of Vatican II shows, work of Catholic theologians which at first might seem to some to be incompatible with official doctrine, can, on further study, come to be seen as soundly based on the church's authentic tradition. The theology of the Eucharist is an area where sound scholarship, based on serious research, is reaching a consensus that post-tridentine Catholic doctrine is too narrowly focused on the words of consecration pronounced by the priest. A more authentic tradition emphasizes the entire eucharistic liturgy as celebrated by the whole gathered people of God. To present and explain this growing consensus, in scholarly papers presented at a theological convention, is the proper work of the Catholic theologian. It does not involve any claim to be an alternative magisterium.

If there are fault lines in U.S. Catholicism they are the fruit of a spirit of antagonism inappropriate to the community of disciples. Incorrect and misleading interpretations of the kind Dulles has given can only augment suspicions and divisions in the church. Why does disagreement among Catholics have to deteriorate into charges of heresy? We ought rather put into practice the "presupposition" with which Saint Ignatius began his *Spiritual Exercises*: "It should be presupposed that every good Christian ought to be more eager to put a good interpretation on a neighbor's statement than to condemn it."

Mary Ann Donovan, S.C., *is president of the CTSA and professor of historical theology at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley.*

PETER STEINFELS

Did the most recent convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America reveal a "wasteland"? Did the major addresses constitute a challenge to well-established Catholic beliefs regarding the priesthood and Eucharist? Must Catholic theologians and church authorities make a "drastic choice" between upholding the society as a legitimate venue for Catholic theology or condemning and possibly replacing it as no longer true to authentic Catholic tradition?

My answers to those questions are no, yes, and no.

I attended the CTSA's convention last June. I went as a reporter for the *New York Times*, as a friend of CTSA members of widely differing views, as a nontheologian who depends on theologians, not the least of them Avery Dulles, for intellectual insight and spiritual nourishment. I also went as an American Catholic more than a little worried about the future of the church.

In no way did the gathering suggest a theological "wasteland." In carefully arguing that a *responsum* from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith did not establish the teaching of *Ordinatio sacerdatolis* as infallible, the society's Task Force was, I would maintain, not only respectful and responsible but actually conservative.

I encountered very little of the anger at church authorities, the flippant dismissals, or argument by crowd-pleasing wisecrack that have often marred theological gatherings on both left and right. The morning prayer sessions were filled to overflowing; the convention liturgy was a central event. Most important, in view of widely voiced worries that the frame of reference for Catholic theology was increasingly becoming the academy rather than the church, the concerns behind the convention's papers and comments were unmistakably pastoral. At the Sunday-morning table discussions of the major addresses on the Eucharist, one theologian's questions arose from her efforts at catechizing young people; another's from her experience with Central European Eastern-rite Catholic immigrants; and so on.

At the same time, three of the convention's four major addresses, taken cumulatively, set a direction that Father Dulles is right to flag, even at the risk of courting the inevitable denunciations.

Unfortunately, Dulles's citations do not serve his critique well. Some are unfair. Others ignore the speaker's nuanced formulations or considerable argumentation. Still others read tone and meanings into these statements that I neither recall nor find in the text. I have heard any number of bishops, for example, declare that apparently many parishioners do not distinguish between rituals performed by the ordained and the nonordained. What is shocking about a theologian reporting the same reality?

Nonetheless, Dulles is not imagining that all three addresses moved in a similar direction, a direction away from positions taken from Trent through Vatican II and toward

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positions much more congenial to the Reformers and in general to their liberal and low-church descendants. Although the major speakers diverged on details, the overall thrust could best be captured by the image of diffusion. Priesthood is diffused into the assembly's leaders, ordained or not, and into the whole assembly. Real presence is diffused into intentional reception of the sacrament and even into spiritual communion. The words of institution and moment of consecration are diffused into other parts of the liturgy and then into the ritual as a whole. The "official" liturgy is diffused into its local, popular instantiations. Traditional methods of theological reflection on texts are diffused into "critical theory of ritual process."

One after another established category and distinction melts away, and what replaces them is fluid, vague, in a word, diffuse. So what is wrong? Aren't established categories and distinctions known to freeze, narrow, deaden? Isn't a gathering of theological scholars exactly the place where disquieting but plausible ideas can be explored?

What was disconcerting was not the exploration of radical possibilities, but the exploration of only those skewed in this one direction. An unacknowledged grid, it seemed to me, worked to determine which "audacious" ideas were to be entertained and which were ignored. At bottom, that grid had to do with the issue of women's ordination and the limitation of priestly leadership to (celibate) men.

This was the tail that wagged the whole meeting. Amend that statement: women's exclusion from the priesthood is too important an issue to be called a "tail." And yet it does have a stranglehold on the theological guild that excludes other, similarly weighty issues.

This imbalance in the major addresses was reinforced by their strange Pollyannishness, their inexplicable lack of irony, self-doubt, or tragic sense. For all the talk of new theological data, of studying concrete, local ritual process, and the experience of "the baptized in the nave," precious little of it actually appeared. There was no registering the various kinds of data, from opinion polls to dress and body language, suggesting that not all the news from "the nave" about eucharistic belief and piety is good—and that at least some negative side effects can be attributed to an understanding of Eucharist that is already much more diffuse than twenty-five years ago.

Take the fairly obvious fact that such increasingly diffuse understandings of Eucharist are more compatible with the world view of naturalistic science—and therefore may be attractive not because they challenge oppressive social hierarchies but because they minimize cultural dissonance and ease social assimilation. One would expect that some speaker might have at least adverted to this possibility.

Surely the most brilliant of these addresses was Gary Macy's virtuoso excursion into medieval eucharistic theology, a paper well-calculated to destabilize conventional Catholic assumptions about ordination, real presence, and the relationships among transubstantiation, reception, eucharistic devotion, and spiritual communion. Macy argued that the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries witnessed a "clericalization of the West" in which the ordained consolidated power over the Eucharist but only as the laity asserted a counter control over popular devotions, including access to the Eucharist redefined as spiritual communion. A similar "renegotiation of ritual power" is going on today, he surmised, with an eradication of the lines between ordained and nonordained that have existed since the mid-thirteenth century.

All very stimulating and maybe even true. As a nonexpert I worry that Macy's paper might be as much a fanciful tissue as, say, John Boswell's *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*, but that will have to be demonstrated by something beyond Dulles's dismissive reference to "a certain display of historical erudition."

I simply note that this formidable erudition was accompanied by unalloyed approval. Macy mentioned no dark side to anything preceding or following the medieval division of ritual labor, only that the poor were well cared for in England, and his enthusiasm for the current "renegotiation of ritual power" was unqualified. Although he cannot "quite imagine the shape that new form of Catholicism is taking," he knows that it is "a new and wonderfully exciting church."

"For the first time in seven hundred years, something really new and wonderful is stirring," he said—a remarkably ahistorical claim for a historian—"and I, for one, am thrilled."

If, like Dulles, I am not so thrilled, I cannot think of a response less apt to be fruitful than the "drastic choices" Dulles contemplates. Another wedge driven between church authorities and theologians will be mutually destructive. And if the vote of 216-22 in a secret ballot on the Task Force report is any measure, there is not a large constituency for yet another competing scholarly group.

The CTSA can forestall that by assuring that its programs are not restricted in their concerns and ideology, that respondents do more than praise papers while adding boilerplate admonitions to pay more attention to the poor or other cultures, and that scholars be expected to relate their work to the established tradition with no less attention than they expend on the latest wave of scholarship.

Church authorities, for their part, need to surrender their lingering illusion that the production and consumption of theology by Catholics can be institutionally controlled as they once were, by oaths, Indexes, excommunications, imprimaturs, academic purges, fear of hell, or some variants of the same. Sorry. Authority will have to engage theology in a new way.

Church authorities must also recognize the high cost, the endless hemorrhaging of credibility, that stems from excluding women not just from the priesthood but, despite apologies and excuses, from all the higher echelons of church office, which remain tied to priesthood. I sincerely hope that Dulles has sounded a warning on this point to the quarters where he enjoys a hearing as vigorous as the one he has raised about the CTSA. □

Peter Steinfels *writes the "Beliefs" column for the* New York Times *and is visiting professor of history at Georgetown University.*

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Richard Alleva

HITCHCOCK LIVES

'Four Days in September'

Four Days in September, the fact-based thriller about some idealistic Brazilian students who kidnapped the American ambassador in 1969, creates suspense the hard way: by making us care about the characters whose lives are in danger. When the leader of the kidnappers, a hate-corroded ideologue, puts a gun to Ambassador Elbrick's head, director Bruno Barreto doesn't have to amplify the cocking of the pistol so that it sounds like the gate of hell being unlocked. We catch our breaths because we genuinely fear for this gentlemanly official with his air of sober decency, wry self-mockery, and need to explain himself lucidly to his abductors whenever they interrogate him. Alan Arkin, who plays Elbrick, has shucked off all the tricks of his youth—the staccato speech pockmarked by sudden shouts, the demented widening of the eyes—and now seems to be able to think his character into existence. Like Paul Newman in *Nobody's Fool*, Arkin is an actor of such technical security that he no longer lunges for his audience but waits for it to focus on him.

But it's not only Elbrick we care about. Most of the terrorists are middle-class students, but Barreto and his scriptwriter, Leopoldo Serran, never let us dismiss their actions as the struttings of radical chic. These youths are truly ashamed that their once democratic country is now ruled by a military junta. And their high spirits and intellectual curiosity don't allow them to embrace the conformity and self-immolation of the true believer, though they sincerely try to. Forced to take guerrilla aliases, they tend to revert to their own names. Encouraged to think of each other as mere components of the coming revolution, they can't stop themselves from flirting, gossiping, arguing, and asking their hostage personal, friendly questions. Fernando, an intellectual who can't shoot straight, hears the ransom statement he penned read on TV and starts to mouth the words along with the announcer, so proud is he of his literary style. Next to these emotionally messy, humane kids, the cell leader seems small and desiccated, a squat thug, and it's not surprising that the young people are soon responding more to the ambassador's dignity than to their cell leader's dedication, though they are still willing to kill Elbrick if their demands aren't met.

With its car chases, shootings, impersonations, and hairbreadth escapes, *Four Days in September* is melodramatic yet never a melodrama. Melodrama demands simplification of morality and it is this simplification that the movie repeatedly avoids. Ideals and reality collide repeatedly through the movie. The guerrillas rob a bank and pause to lecture their captive audience of tellers and customers on the righteousness of this "expropriation." (Oh, those revolutionary euphemisms!) But a terrified girl in the crowd can only put her head on her mother's shoulder and weep, even though the revolutionaries are supposedly robbing on her behalf. Fernando, taking a cab, hears the driver—another one of the common people the kidnappers are trying to serve—praise the subversives he's been hearing about on the radio. "They've got guts! They're my heroes!" (Fernando delighted.) "Them and the American astronauts!" (Fernando flustered.) The enthusiasms of *machismo* are seldom politically correct. And who is it that provides the police with the clue that leads them to the kidnappers' hideaway? A baker. The people united can never be defeated, especially when they've got a hot tip for the cops.

Yet, misguided as these youngsters are, their kidnapping does result in the freeing of many dissidents from the hands of torturers. And some of the apprehended kidnappers will themselves be liberated from torture by a future kidnapping (not shown on screen) perpetrated by German terrorists. Can it be that when a government puts itself above the law, it makes this sort of ongoing exchange of prisoners inevitable? (With innocent bystanders, sooner or later, caught in the crossfire.)

But can a movie be too humane, too complex in its sympathies? *Four Days in September* has drawn criticism by por-

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traying a security-force torturer not as a monster but as a man capable of love (for his wife), concern for civil peace, and self-doubt (confessing to his wife that torture perpetrates the image of the state-as-monster against which even more idealists will rebel). Since torture is indeed monstrous, isn't any characterization of the torturer, any presentation of his psychology or domestic situation, beside the point? Shouldn't the torturer have been portrayed with chilling neutrality as a mere component of the authoritarian state?

Whatever Barreto's answer would be, here is mine: Torture is a crime against humanity, and the torturer himself is indivisible from that sinned-against humanity. The scene with the torturer's wife isn't there to present some specious relativism (torturers are just folks like anybody else) but to show how the poison from the husband's job pollutes the private life that he has striven to keep separate from his work. When the wife learns of her loved one's job, something inside her collapses; we see in her face that she'll never look at her spouse again without imagining the cries of his victims. *Four Days in September* is not an exercise in liberal relativism but a work of radical humanity.

Let me add that it contains the best action sequences since the Harrison Ford thrillers, *Patriot Games* and *A Clear and Present Danger*. But whereas Ford has to jump off motor boats and helicopters to get our pulses pounding, Barreto gets the same effect by planting Fernando in an apartment with his sweetheart after the kidnapping has been resolved. She goes in the next room to get something but Fernando continues talking to her. She replies. Fernando continues chatting. Then she doesn't reply. And doesn't reply. Fernando stiffens. And then he knows...*they've* come for him and they've already got her.

I've often wondered when the old Hitchcockian elements of silence, nonresponse, and unseen awfulness would make their reappearance in a cinema dominated by the noise of machinery and explosions. Well, here they are in a compact and neatly wrapped package that never stops ticking. □

Tantur Rector Search Announcement

Tantur Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies in Israel invites nominations and applications for the position of rector. Tantur, located just outside Jerusalem on the road to Bethlehem, is a center for theological inquiry, Christian ecumenical studies, and interreligious dialogue between Christians and those of other world faiths, especially Jews and Muslims. The institute, jointly founded by Pope Paul VI and the University of Notre Dame, is a residential center for visiting scholars interested in the ecumenical and interreligious dimensions of scriptural, theological and pastoral studies. It also offers three-month sessions in continuing education for parish clergy, religious teachers and other church workers, as well as semesters of international study for undergraduates. Since its creation in 1971, over 3,500 Orthodox, Protestants, Anglicans and Roman Catholics have participated in the programs.

The rector is the academic and administrative leader of the institute, and is responsible for the continuing development of its ecumenical and interreligious mission. With the assistance of the vice-rector and administrator, the rector oversees the educational programs and conferences, the finances, and the staff, and develops cooperative relationships with appropriate academic and religious persons to further the aims of the institute, both in the local and international arenas.

The successful candidate will possess significant experience in educational administration and a distinguished record of academic accomplishment in the area of biblical theology, ecumenical and interreligious studies, or related fields. Excellent management, communication, interpersonal and cooperative skills are necessary qualifications. A doctorate is preferred, and a working knowledge of Hebrew and/or Arabic would be strong assets in the position.

Nominations and applications will be accepted until May 1, 1998. Applicants should provide a letter of introduction, a current resume and four references. Applications should be submitted to:

Tantur Rector Search Committee
c/o Rev. Mark L. Poorman, C.S.C.
134 Hayes-Healy Center
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

VITA DULCEDO SPES

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Frank McConnell

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

'Moyers on Addiction: Close to Home'

In the midseventies, there was a brilliant TV commercial for some alcoholism treatment center, which I remember as "The Elephant in the Living Room." Here's the gag. We see an irenic domestic tableau, dad reading the paper, mom knitting, brother and sister playing Monopoly or something on the carpet; suddenly there's this trumpeted roar right out of a Tarzan movie, and this elephant—this I mean *big* damn elephant—crashes through the back wall and proceeds to stomp all over the living room. And nobody even looks up.

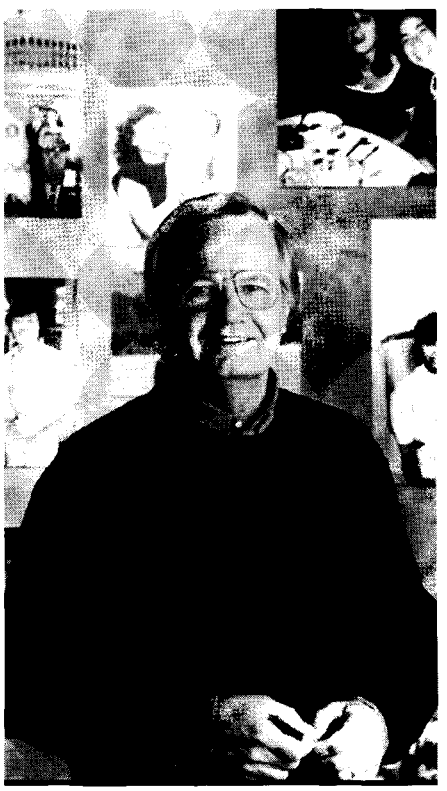
You get it, right? If you've got an addict (or, for that matter, a psychotic or a manic-depressive or just a generic creep) in your family, the ordinary, the *human* impulse is, quite simply, to ignore it for as long as possible. After all, what's one elephant more or less?

One of my few complaints about "Moyers on Addiction: Close to Home," the fine series airing on PBS beginning March 29 (check local listings), is that the writers missed the chance to use that commercial somewhere in the five episodes of the show. Otherwise "Close to Home" unrolls as probably one of the sanest, most grown-up statements yet to emerge in our national—and frequently goofy—dialogue on addiction.

For Moyers himself, furthermore, the series is personal, even cathartic, in a way his other ventures haven't been. As he acknowledges early in the first installment, a few years ago he and his wife found the topic *really* close to home, when they discovered that their oldest son, William, had a serious problem with drugs and booze: their very own elephant in their very own living room.

Reference is made throughout the series to William's recovery, relapse, and eventual re-recovery. (This is the pattern, by the way, that addicts pretty much have to look forward to: the elephant never goes *all the way* away.) But—as you might expect if you know Moyers's previous work, his series of "Conversations" with influential thinkers, or his series "Genesis" or "The Language of Life"—the references are all in the interest of the show, and never merely, tawdry confessional.

Addiction, after all, is a sexy topic, drenched in the allure of the bizarre and the *verboten*. We may choose to ignore it in the living room, but we love to see it on the screen. Could the Jerry Springers of the world survive for a week without guests abjectly "addicted" to—well, to booze or coke or smack or shopping or sex (and I've never understood why *that* one is an addiction) or, at the very least, to collecting Beanie Babies? And actors, notoriously, *love* playing withdrawal scenes, because they not only get to chew the scenery, they get to *chew the scenery*.



But none of that here. The series is almost puritanically nontabloid, and because of that it's *not*, about the subject of addiction itself, destructively puritanical.

The first show, "Portrait of Addiction," is essentially a montage of tight, close-up interviews with nine recovering addicts, from a wide range of walks and classes, describing the arc of their using. And whatever the substance, the arc is always the same, from euphoria to dependence on obsessive craving and planning to sate the craving. (The most terrible thing about being a junkie is that you know every day will always be the same: always.) Not much new there, except that the show has the courage to allow its nine very articulate junkies to state what somehow always gets lost in our normal discussions of addiction: the pure fact that folks get hooked on one substance or another because the substance makes you feel by God *fantastic*—for a while.

I highlight this just because—and, of course, I write as an alumnus—it's so elementary and so seldom recognized in our "just say no" or fried-egg "this is your brain on drugs" TV spots. Nobody wakes up in the morning and thinks, "Hey! I'd really like to be an addict!" People use junk because junk is really fun. As part 2, "The Hijacked Brain," makes clear, dope (booze and nicotine included here) releases dopamine, a feel-great reward thingie, for the brain to play with. Now this is usually a hormone that you earn by completing a task: building a bookcase, tending your garden, writing a novel. But the stuff gives you the reward without having to go through the tedium, same ultimate effect with less wasted motion. This series makes points about substance abuse that need to be made, and that, largely, haven't been. As: folks do it because they like it. As: a certain—pretty considerable—percentage of the population is *always*, just naturally, going to want to get high. And as: Draconian measures like interdiction and incarceration—our now-decades-old "War on Drugs," and one of the Seven Great Running Jokes of the Modern World—do not and cannot work.

The show doesn't go quite far enough

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to suit me. Cards on the table here, I believe that the only solution to the problem is to declare it *not* a "problem": that is, across-the-board, blanket legalization. Of *everything*. In the countries where it's been tried, the user population has either stayed the same or declined a fraction (let's face it: for a kid, at least, the seduction of the forbidden is at least as much a rush as the rush itself).

Episode 3 examines the ways in which kids, including the kids of addicts, can be educated to, if not avoid, at least understand and minimize, the effects of the condition. Part 4 discusses the existing treatment programs and makes the crucial point that treatment needs to be as personalized as various junkies are—and they *are*—personal. One size, in other words, does not fit all.

Part 5 is the payoff and—given our regnant paranoia about the subject—it's quite brave. Moyers doesn't, as I said, go so far as to suggest legalization; but he does make a strong case—citing programs already in place—for decriminalization, meaning mandated counseling for users rather than imprisonment. The controlling metaphor in this segment is the remarkable turnabout in our national attitude toward smoking (and I light another Dunhill as I type this): cigarette use has declined precipitately just because folks have begun to talk about how fundamentally bad it is.

Not that I, a dedicated smoker, find all this so inspiriting. But the fact is that "Close to Home," compared to the righteous nonsense normally mumbled by our politicians and pundits about the "problem" of addiction, is genuinely crystalline in its cogency.

I've never been a real fan of Moyers: a little too facile, a little too glib about ideas, I always thought. But this time around, I found myself compelled to admit the obvious: he's as much a public intellectual, serious and sensitive, as TV has so far produced. And "public intellectual" is an honorable role. "Close to Home" is eminently worth watching as a careful consideration of a condition that affects practically everybody, that is not going to go away, and that hasn't, on TV, ever been discussed this sensibly. □

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We're just wonderful people

A History of the American People
Paul Johnson
HarperCollins Publishers, $35, 1,088 pages

Chris Appy

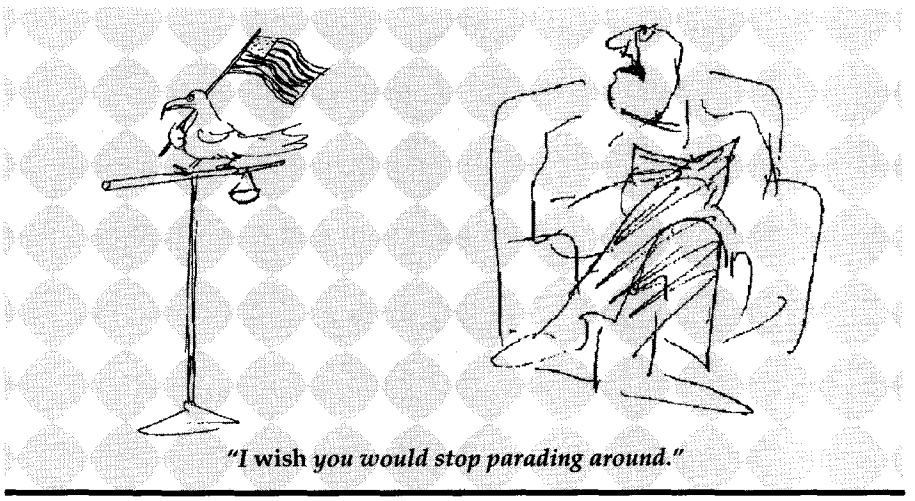
Conservatives seem to believe that left-wing "revisionists" are winning the historical culture wars. If so, the revolutionary consequences are surprisingly hard to identify. Most of my students flock to places like Wall Street, Amgen, and Hewlett Packard, and very few are demanding workplace democracy or joining radical history book clubs during their hours of leisure. In the public arena, left-wing dominance is equally difficult to document. Witness the 1995 decision by the Smithsonian Institute to abandon an exhibit that raised historical questions about the necessity and morality of dropping atomic bombs on Japan in 1945. Editorials raged against the museum for "dishonoring" U.S. veterans "whose lives were saved by the bomb," an ironclad faith the exhibit would have questioned. The Senate voted unanimously to condemn the proposal and the museum caved in, at the same time pulling the plug on another potentially controversial exhibit about the Vietnam War.

An analogous debate surfaced in 1994 regarding National History Standards. The idea of creating a voluntary set of outlines for historical instruction in American schools had received strong support from President George Bush, and the work was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities under Lynne Cheney. Cheney was appalled by the outcome, describing the guidelines in a *Wall Street Journal* review as a "grim and gloomy" portrayal written by left-wing ideologues with a "hatred of traditional history." Rush Limbaugh called the standards "a bunch of p.c. crap." And once again the Senate voted to condemn a history that was not sufficiently celebratory.

With the publication of Paul Johnson's *A History of the American People*, it's time for the right wing to declare victory and withdraw. For here is celebration galore and you won't have to defer your gratification. The title page epigraph sets the tone: "Be not afraid of greatness." If that's not ingratiating enough, turn to the dedication: "To the people of America—strong, outspoken, intense in their convictions, sometimes wrong-headed but always generous and brave, with a passion for justice no nation has ever matched." To spice things up along the way Johnson has included many gratuitous observations on that new mainstay of right-wing inquiry—the presidential sex life (Wilson was "highly sexed," LBJ had a "voracious sexual appetite," and Eisenhower may have been "impotent" during an adulterous affair).

Johnson is a prolific and erudite British journalist (*Modern Times, A History of Christianity, Intellectuals*) whose interest in American history began in earnest during the 1950s, and it may occur to the reader that most of this volume was conceived in that dawn of the American Century. Not only does Johnson blithely ignore much of the scholarship written since about 1968, he shares the '50s' penchant for national history written from the top, about the top. Here is a history of generals, diplomats, inventors, industrialists, and every single president. "Great events in history are determined by all kinds of factors, but the most important single one is always the quality of the people in charge." How tidy. No need to muck around in the flotsam and jetsam of ordinary lives.

It would be less exasperating if Johnson offered a more penetrating analysis of the "quality" of those leaders. Despite some glancing jabs at Jefferson, the "humorless" "hypochondriac," the nation was founded by the "Enlightenment made flesh" and it passed the torch to the real heroes of the story—the capitalist system and the men who provided it legal, technical, financial, and political maintenance, men like John Marshall, Thomas Edison, Andrew Carnegie, J.P.



"I wish you would stop parading around."

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Morgan, and Calvin Coolidge. The villains are those who lack faith in the marketplace. Here's a quiz. In the nineteenth century what was "the one mortal sin America committed against the virtuous creed of *laissez-faire*?" Slavery? No. Government bankrolling of railroads? No. Answer: high tariffs! And had it not been for the "meddlesome activism" of both Herbert Hoover and FDR, the Great Depression would have been solved by a "natural recovery."

Apparently the great contribution of women in American history has been provocative party chatter. Johnson gleefully treats us to a half dozen of Dorothy Parker's *bons mots* (for example, "If all the girls at a Yale prom were laid end-to-end, I wouldn't be at all surprised"). But there are still a few really serious women to deal with, so he offers three derisive pages on the suffragists under the heading "Women Stroll onto the Scene." Then they stroll off for three hundred pages and reappear miraculously on the final two—"The Triumph of Women."

Oh, perhaps I'm not being fair. We do get a few kind words about that great American Margaret Thatcher, and there's Harriet Beecher Stowe who writes "to make ends meet and give her children a few treats" (I guess that business about slavery was just a plot device). And don't forget Julia Morgan who designed William Randolph Hearst's San Simeon castle. Johnson regards this as a truly major contribution and I'm sure he's sincere given his special fondness for the country homes of the obscenely rich. Eventually they become museums—one of the many ways "the American plutocracy ultimately benefits the American democracy." Why, then, did he have to spoil it all by calling Morgan "the epitome of fierce proto-lesbianism"? This is particularly objectionable because Johnson promised at the outset that he would not "acknowledge the existence of hyphenated Americans." Red, yellow, black, and white, we're all precious in his sight ("I love them and salute them"). But there you have it, a whole new category of hyphenated Americans: proto-lesbians.

Professions of multiracial love aside, white folks do all the talking. In 1956 it was a small sign of racial progress that Kenneth Stampp ended his book on slavery by actually quoting a former slave. Now, more than forty years later, this history of the "American people" grants not a single sentence to one of the millions who experienced enslavement. Frederick Douglass does not even stroll onto the scene.

It is no surprise by now to learn that Johnson finds little to criticize in the white conquest of the continent. He documents some examples of white brutality against Indians (especially Andrew Jackson's), but believes Francis Parkman "shows the Indians as they were: improvident, unreliable, sometimes treacherous, vacillating, above all lazy." There's no p.c. crap in this history; only ample doses of the real thing.

Nor do Johnson's sympathies enlarge as he moves to the twentieth century. Far from extolling the nonviolent convictions of the early civil rights movement, Johnson makes the ludicrous claim that sit-ins and freedom rides "almost inevitably involved the use or threat of force, or provoked it." As for Malcolm X, he warrants just two words—"black racist." And what about the poor who are always with us? Not to worry. They suffered for approximately one paragraph at the turn of the century and then moved to the burbs.

I'm not primarily troubled by Johnson's uncritical celebration of capitalism and authority. It is probably preferable to the mind-numbing neutrality of many textbooks. At least readers can identify a point of view. What's more disturbing is the fatuous claim that this is a history of "the American people" that honors a "passion for justice." It is nothing of the sort and that is unfortunate because we still need books that have the power to inspire us toward more daring conceptions of our common past and possibilities. □

Chris Appy *teaches history at MIT and is the author of* Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam *(University of North Carolina Press, 1993).*

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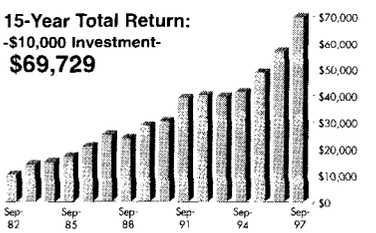

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FAR FROM HOME

A Lover's Almanac
Maureen Howard
Viking, $24.95, 270 pp.

Jack Schwartz

In her new novel, Maureen Howard moves far afield from the literary precincts of spirited Irish-Catholic women where she has made her mark. In this more youthful, futuristic venue, Howard's protagonists are a star-tossed couple, Louise (Lou, Lou-Lou) Moffett, an aspiring artist on the cusp of Downtown success, and her boyfriend Arthur (Artie) Freeman, a computer-graphics adept for a cyberspace ad agency. The opening scene is a fifties-style New Year's costume party, replete with tuna and taffeta, to greet the year 2000. Artie, who has sampled too many martinis, assaults two of the guests, including Louise's art dealer, and is unceremoniously hauled out of the apartment and hurled from Lou's life. The next two-thirds of the book is devoted to Artie's efforts to get himself back into Lou's good graces. The outcome is never in doubt. What we have here, as Howard readily acknowledges, is an extended lover's quarrel, hardly the stuff of millennial reckoning. So what is the author doing? Surely a novelist of Howard's heft (*Grace Abounding, Expensive Habits, Natural History*) has something more up her sleeve than providing love-tipped arrows for Generation Y.

It turns out that the book's most captivating character is Arthur's grandfather, Cyril, who has brought up the fatherless boy from age eleven when his mercurial mother, Fiona, died in a boating accident. With Cyril, the son of a boozy Irish cop, himself a scholarship lad who married up and did well on Wall Street, we are back on Howard's home turf. It is Cyril's story, a life of accommodation to a loveless marriage and a meaningless career, with which the novelist seems most comfortable. We are beguiled when Sylvie, the widowed Cyril's bygone lover, appears after fifty years to rekindle the fires of a brief but memorable encounter. The other characters are interesting acquaintances; Cyril is an old friend who confides in the author more easily than the rest. It is his failures of nerve, their consequences, and Arthur's own efforts to break loose from their quiescent legacy that inform this parable on the downward pull of generations.

The plot reverberates between flashbacks to Cyril's could-have-beens and fast-forwards to the young lovers' still-might-be's, all of it wound on the metaphorical spool of *The Almanac*. If our faults lie in ourselves, our stars certainly give us a nudge and the almanac provides a handy device for Howard to comment on our struggle to give free will room to maneuver within destiny. Interspersed throughout the novel are homilies, folk wisdom, weather forecasts, zodiac signs, auguries, factoids, advice, biographical sketches (Benjamin Franklin, Isaac Newton) and other commonplaces that have graced the genre from Poor Richard's debut (1733) to the perennial *Farmer's Almanac* which will serve as inspiration for Louise to turn the demons of her rustic past to artistic purpose. The design is clever but the results are mixed. After a while the adages and advisories become intrusive; whatever their symbolic quotient they are distracting and finally wearying.

More disquieting is the author's reversion to stereotype in evoking her minor characters. Arthur's false friend Bud Boyce is lampooned as an exploitive cyber hustler, a Bill Gates wannabee, and a lecher. Louise's dairy-farmer father, who conducts Strangelovian experiments in cow-cloning and who is variously referred to as the Mighty Milkman and The Big Cheese, is an ogre: insensitive, oppressive, malevolent; he does everything but intone fee, fi, fo, fum. A lapsed priest who writes popular spiritual tomes is a bop-bag Deepak Gantry.

Also annoying is the use of overheated language. For whatever reason, Howard has chosen to use the conventions of Harlequin Romance to project modern *angst*. She announces her intentions early with Lou's anguish after the disastrous New Year's party: "And, having sworn off the man, she's into it again, choking back saltwater sorrow, for can it be that one night can unravel their years, one rotten night of Artie's misdemeanors. The answer is yes." And later, pining away: "...for she has neglected all her friends, imprisoned herself with the legend of her sorrow, her abandonment...and shame ...." For someone with Howard's usually unerring ear, this time out she can't seem to resist a cliché: "Every day tells Louise Moffett this is the winter of her discontent"; or a bad pun—the cynical art dealer's "schlock of recognition."

But the real problem with the novel is that the key to its mystery—Artie's mother Fiona—is a wraith. The novel follows Arthur's quest to find the identity of his father. The trails leads to a failed Jesuit, Father Joe Murphy, now a harmless math teacher at a Catholic high school in Connecticut but once tapped for higher calling before he had an affair with Fiona in the charged East Village atmosphere of a revolutionary Catholic commune during the Vietnam era. Fiona was no mere ripe and randy flower-child but a charismatic presence with a deep moral dimension that stirred everyone she met. But we never learn why "they had all been in love with that redhead." In the novel it is simply a given, but we want more. Still, Fiona and Father Murphy, briefly sketched, are far more intriguing than Lou-Lou and Artie wholly rendered. Interestingly, the writing here is strong and spare, dispensing with the coy affectations that too often mar the novel.

Howard is too skillful an author to write a bad book, but she has not written a good one. What could have been a movable feast of the century is little more than a confection, a harmless enough soufflé lightened by the occasional divertissement, but lacking the grit and grace of hard-earned lives that represent the author's best work. □

Jack Schwartz's *reviews have appeared in* Commonweal, *the* Forward, *and other publications.*

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The Wonder Worker
Susan Howatch
Knopf, $25.95, 533 pp.

Paul Elie

"It's Kleenex time again at the Rectory." So says the retired-exorcist-in-residence at Saint Benet's. No need to worry, though. A spiritual director is on call round the clock. So are a parish priest, a curate, a doctor, several befrienders, and a cook with a Cordon Bleu certificate. This is a rectory in a Susan Howatch novel. Experts abound.

Howatch, an Englishwoman who has written seventeen novels, is a past master of the ensemble-cast drama. With her last book, *Absolute Truths*, she wrapped up what she called the Starbridge series, "six novels about the Church of England in the twentieth century." Whereas the action of the Starbridge series was concluded in 1965, *The Wonder Worker* is set in 1988 and deals with alternative healing and "the interface between the medical and the spiritual." *Absolute Truths* had a plot line about an ex-exorcist who wished to establish a "center of Christian healing" in Starbridge. In the new novel this fellow, Father Lewis Hall, is in residence in a thriving healing center at an Anglican parish in London. For twenty years, he has been the John the Baptist to a magnetic younger priest named Nicholas Darrow.

In the sixties, Nicholas was a "wonderworker" who used his gifts as a hypnotist and psychic to amuse the smart set at Oxford and beguile dangerous young ladies. Now he has a ministry of healing modeled on that of "Jesus Christ, the greatest healer who ever lived." One day, a "fat plain girl" named Alice wanders into the parish's weekly healing service to seek help for a dying aunt. She is transfixed by Nicholas, who is radiant in the pulpit. Not long after, he hypnotizes the aunt, enabling the woman to make peace with Alice. Not long after, the aunt dies with dignity. Not long after, Alice moves in as the new cook at the healing center and begins to be healed of her eating disorder and her low self-esteem.

Not long after that—this is a melodrama—Nicholas's life falls apart. Alice is in love with him and is shedding pounds rapidly. Lewis has fallen for a society dame. Stacy, his curate, may be gay; may be HIV-positive; may be suicidal. And his wife wants to end their marriage. Nicholas's solution to his marital problems is to hypnotize his wife and then seduce her, a "spiritual rape."

Howatch is a moralist, and this episode—and the seventy-times-seven calamities that follow—is constructed so that she can make distinctions, deliver sermonettes, and argue her case for the

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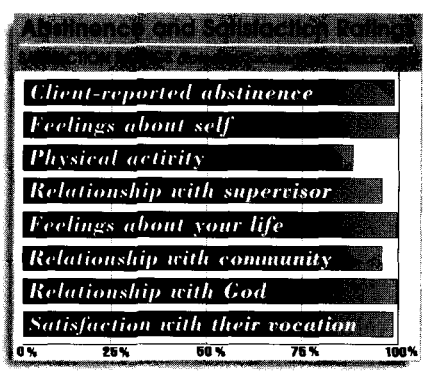

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relevance of religion to contemporary life. The novel turns on the distinction between the "wonderworker," who uses psychic gifts to manipulate others to his own ends, and the Christian healer, who selflessly "offer[s] these powers to God and so ensure[s] they were always used for the good." There is also a running debate between the language of religious tradition and that of popular psychology. "I decide that it's unlikely that Francie is, in the classical sense, possessed," Father Lewis offers at one point. "Much more probable is the theory that the devil could be infiltrating the rectory by riding on a mental disorder which was already present in her ."

When the characters speak that way (and they always do), we are meant to ask: Are these people searching modern believers, or "power-junkies hooked on deliverance, crisis-addicts mainlining on salvation"? For Howatch, that is the question. It becomes clear that the real conflict in the novel is not between healing and wonderworking, or between Christianity and psychology. It is between living one's life according to a theory and taking life as it comes. The healing center is thronged with specialists, each with a theory. And again and again their theories lead them to jump to conclusions and make diagnoses before the symptoms are confirmed.

Alice comes to this Wonderland as an emissary of common sense. She is an English empiricist in a bed-sit, one who names her cat James and gets her best ideas while doing the dishes. She is also meant to be a surrogate for the reader, surrendering her initial skepticism about the ministry of healing—and religion generally—as she is drawn into life at the rectory.

But the reader stays skeptical, because too much of what happens in the novel is ridiculous or unbelievable. A volunteer befriender named Francie smears a dagger with chopped liver and hides it in her purse to convince the others that she is a murderess. Father Lewis earnestly prays for Alice to be delivered of her disordered love for rum-raisin ice cream.

For this reader, then, the real conflict in *The Wonder Worker* is the conflict between the contrivances of melodrama and the workings of realistic fiction. Susan Howatch creates vivid characters and has a keen sense for the way religion shakes out in their lives. As a result, *The Wonder Worker* has more religion in it than a dozen books of theology, and it is conveyed to the reader in a way that feels like life—not through symbolism or metaphor, but blended with pop psychology, banter, and the ceaseless white noise of the mind as a way her people deal with what life throws at them.

Unfortunately, Howatch persists in telling her stories in the rickety, ritualized form of melodrama. Like popular psychology, or the rhetoric of Christian healing, melodrama is a useful but limited device, and in the end it obscures the clear sight of things as they are. One wishes that when she ended the Starbridge series, Howatch had also stopped writing melodramas, so that she might have brought her religious sense into a fully convincing and contemporary piece of fiction. □

Paul Elie *is a frequent* Commonweal *contributor.*

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RELIGION BOOKNOTES

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Kenan Osborne has gained a good reputation for a series of books on sacramental theology (holy orders and sacramental reconciliation) which are marked by a reliable summary of current research and his own perspective on the subject at hand. This work on the Resurrection of Christ derives from Osborne's own conviction that contemporary theology lacks a cogent account of how the Resurrection of Christ fits into a total Christology or, as he calls it, a "unified Christology." Little has been said historically in the magisterium about the Resurrection (apart, of course, from the creeds and professions of faith). Until recently the topic, among scholastic manualists at least, was largely apologetic. However, a good deal of recent scriptural work has been done on the question of the Resurrection.

Osborne's book presents a survey of contemporary theological research on the Resurrection, a close reading of the pertinent New Testament texts with an almost exclusive focus on the Gospel narratives, a theology of the Resurrection derived from that New Testament reading, and, finally, an effort to fit the above into a "unified Christology." At the risk of oversimplification, Osborne's thesis seems to be that the New Testament account of the Resurrection centers on what God did in Jesus (raising him from the dead). The Resurrection, reflected in the received experience of those who wrote of that event, is linked to the larger issue of what the "kingdom" or "reign" of God really is.

The Resurrection of Jesus
by Kenan Osborne
Paulist, $14.95, 194 pp.

Osborne makes the interesting analogy between how the Gospel writers depict the Resurrection and how a mystic like John of the Cross writes about religious experience. For John, first there is an experience, then there is the writing of poetry to somehow capture the experience. Finally a prose commentary and perhaps a "map" shows how to read the account of the experience. (By the way: Osborne might have profitably commented on the prologue to John of the Cross's *Spiritual Canticle*, where the great mystic sets this process out in some detail.) Osborne's basic point, however, is a good one: If we accept the reliability of writings about religious experience like John's, why can't we accept similar accounts, even with imaginative elements, that speak of the Resurrection narratives? For Osborne, that the Gospel Resurrection accounts are "constructed" does not imply they are fictions in the pejorative sense of the term.

There is much useful material in this book, especially Osborne's summary of previous research. I very much liked, for example, his reflection on the "kingdom of God" in his final chapter, even though it was not clear to me how that chapter related to the theology of the Resurrection. In fact, the last chapter barely discusses the Resurrection at all. The final chapter seems tagged on to the book to put flesh on it.

I thought that this work had other weaknesses as well. Why was there no sustained analysis of 1 Cor. 15? That is an account of Resurrection faith predating the Gospels by perhaps as much as a generation, and in which Paul himself notes that he was "handing on" to the Corinthians something that he had received. Furthermore, Osborne does not even mention the New Testament *kerygmas* located in Acts, all of which end with an affirmation of Jesus being raised from the dead. Osborne's unremitting predilection for the Gospels at the expense of the Pauline corpus does not give enough of a rounded view of what the early church affirmed about the Resurrection, especially Paul's own attempt to explain to people who had a too-carnal notion of the Resurrection as "mere" resuscitation of a dead person.

It is clear that within a generation after the earthly life of Jesus, the Pauline communities taught that Jesus had lived, had died, and was raised by the power of God from the dead. What is one to make of that? In other words, Osborne's treatment doesn't do justice to a topic that is complex and multilayered even with respect to the Gospel materials on which he concentrates. His reflections on theology are even more problematic. Osborne is such a good theologian and so widely read that we can only hope that this little book, useful in so many ways, is a "finger exercise" for something far more meaty in the future.

Lucien Richard's thesis is straightforward: the theological category of *kenosis* (self-emptying) is an extremely useful resource for correlating the meaning of Jesus Christ with the human condition. He uses a close reading of the classic text in Philippians 2 as well as a consideration of the Gospel of Mark (which he reads as a kind of commentary on the text from Philippians) to emphasize a "kenotic" understanding of Jesus Christ. Salvation and well-being are "attained not by conquest, but by self-effacement and self-giving love....Real authority and real power lie in compassionate love, in choosing weakness instead of strength."

Christ: The Self-Emptying of God
by Lucien Richard
Paulist, $18.95, 236 pp.

Richard's admiration for this approach derives largely from his judgment that the classical formulation of the Council of Chalcedon that Jesus Christ as "two natures united in one person" is too abstract. Chalcedon lacks the power, paradox, and open-endness that characterize, for example, the narrative Christology of Mark. To Karl Rahner's famous question about whether there is Christology after Chalcedon, Richard gives a definite yes. A kenotic Christology is able to hold in tension two elements: power (Christ is the Son of God) and powerlessness (Christ lives in the human condition).

Richard applies his kenotic Christology to a wide range of theological issues.

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Creation is seen as self-emptying (one hears the process voices of Hartshorne and Whitehead here); the Trinity as self-giving, both in its immanent and economic life, as is the relationship of the Cross and the Resurrection. Finally, Richard offers a vision of the kenotic church where power is given and dispersed rather than consolidated and exercised. The implications of this view of Christology for social justice are patent. Richard's picture of Jesus Christ represents the compassionate face of God who is self-giving in creation, in revelation, in the Incarnation, and in the church.

I suspect that parts of this book have a long history. The opening chapter, with its analysis of the human condition, has a very dated ring to it; it was like a march down memory lane as one listens to the voices of Langdon Gilkey, Ernest Becker, E. F. Schumacher, E. Fromm, Christopher Lasch, Herbert Marcuse, and other iconic voices of the 1960s and 1970s. Nor do the endnotes (sigh) reveal references for anything written after the late 1980s for any of the other chapters.The book has no bibliography and there is a barely adequate index. The only erratum I noticed is that the distinguished British exegete, Morna Hooker, became, throughout, Monica Hooker. This volume, in short, though useful, needed some updating, especially in the first chapter.

Dean Brackley is one of the Jesuits who went to El Salvador to replace the Jesuit professors who had been murdered in 1989 at the Universidad CentroAmerica. An American trained at the University of Chicago, he had worked in the Bronx as an organizer and pastoral worker. This book, reflecting the author's background as both a Jesuit activist and an academic, investigates a straightforward but very complex issue: What is the intimate relationship between salvation and liberation? To put the issue in other terms: Is there a continuity between transcendent salvation and immanent liberation? Are those terms discrete or badly posed or in dialectical relationship?

Divine Revolution: Salvation & Liberation in Catholic Thought
by Dean Brackley
Orbis, $19, 197 pp.

Brackley chose three thinkers who constructed classic paradigms to relate Christian faith to contemporary social life. Jacques Maritain's "integral humanism" was a sophisticated scholastic model of the relationship between the temporal order (the world of time, politics, society, the perishable) and the spiritual order whose end is the contemplation of the truth which is God. The right ordering of the former is understood to lead us to an appreciation of the latter. These realms are inseparable but also distinct.

Karl Rahner, by contrast, argued forcefully that the order of redemption is within the order of creation. The "supernatural existential" (Rahner's famous neologism) means that, in Brackley's words, "the offer of salvation stamps every aspect of human existence, not from without but from within." The common critique of Rahner is that he is insufficiently political (Metz) or that his rather

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optimistic view of the world does not take seriously enough the fallen nature of humankind, both individual and social (Moltmann).

Gustavo Gutierrez, aware of those criticisms, knew that to create a fully adequate theology one had to ask: What is the relationship between salvation and the historical process of human liberation? Gutierrez understood liberation to be a triad: political, human liberation allows for human freedom and solidarity and, finally, liberation from sin, so that one might enjoy communion with God and with others. That latter form of liberation has mostly preoccupied Gutierrez in his later books, including his great meditation on the Book of Job and his classic work on spirituality, *We Drink from Our Own Wells* (1983).

After an analysis of these three seminal thinkers, Brackley adds some further reflections taken from feminist thinkers and from the Basque Jesuit, Ignacio Ellacuria, his martyred colleague, as well as from Ellacuria's mentor, the philosopher Xavier Zubiri. All of their work was oriented toward overcoming dualisms between nature/grace or transcendence/immanence or history/eternity. Brackley himself is much taken by the notion of "transcendence in history"—an idea that Ellacuria gets from Zubiri.

Brackley concludes with a meditation on Jesus and the reign of God. For my taste, it was an extremely satisfying but all-too brief reflection on the New Testament teaching about Jesus' preaching of the kingdom. Especially provocative is Brackley's analysis of the Beatitudes, drawing on the exhaustive research of Jacques Dupont, and concluding, in a wonderful phrase, that God "does not take the side of the poor because they are good but because God is good and compassionate to those who suffer."

Drawing on a number of fine studies, Brackley makes some fine points. Let me cite one example. Jesus, according to a oft-cited passage in Mark (14:7), says that the "poor you will have with you always." Brackley notes that this is a very inadequate translation of the Greek, which uses the present, not the future tense. Hence, the sense is something like: "The poor you have around you all the time." This can be read as, "Whatever you will, you can do good to them, but you do not always have Me." What Brackley says on this issue complements materials in Osborne and Richard.

I suspect that the earlier, more academic part of Brackley's book derives from dissertation work. It is not without interest and it is certainly fair and balanced, if somewhat dated. Brackley does not dismiss Maritain, nor does he accept the early Gutierrez without comment on his weaknesses. But the best part of the book, in my estimation, is Brackley's own passionate commitment to the New Testament message of Jesus. Indeed, I wanted more along these lines. Perhaps the author, refined by his experiences North and South of the border, will take up his pen again. As Jon Sobrino says in the foreword to this book, what is at stake is not a theoretical debate but the very credibility of Christian belief itself. □

Lawrence S. Cunningham *teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

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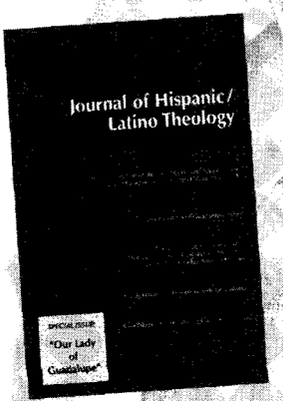

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

from South Carolina, no matter how repugnant Calhoun's views on race now appear to us. RICHARD ALLEVA

Julian of Norwich, hurray

Congratulations on your publishing of Frederick Bauerschmidt's wonderful article on Julian of Norwich [February 27]; the article was informative, interesting, and timely for the Lenten season. Especially rewarding to me was the author's calling attention to Julian's spirituality as an alternative to the many current "spiritual" approaches that are contributing, as Bauerschmidt put it, to the "trivialization of the Christian tradition."

RICHARD A. LOVELL
East Petersburg, Pa.

Thanks for the memories

Clifford Thompson's essay, "Black and American: What Does It Mean?" [February 13], reminded us of our debt to African-Americans for the gift of jazz. We should be no less grateful for the gift of gospel music; it comes from the same soul.

We in the Newark archdiocese recently buried a much-loved auxiliary bishop, Joseph Francis. It was a most joyful funeral, with music that reinforced our faith in the Resurrection. (REV.) WALTER DEBOLD
South Orange, N.J.

Helpful on Puerto Rico

Joseph Policano's article on Puerto Rico [February 27] is a remarkably concise but thorough analysis of a very complicated situation. Thanks to the author and *Commonweal* for this helpful report on an important but neglected topic.

FRANK N. GALLAGHER
Doylestown, Pa.

Coming, April 10
Education Issue

The glass is half full/empty

I welcome the balanced comments of Father Roland Murphy, O.Carm. [Correspondence, February 27] on my January 16 article on Catholic biblical scholarship—particularly since his own work in the field represents, in so many ways, precisely the combination of critical engagement and imaginative insight that I regard as peculiarly if not exclusively Catholic. My article—based on a presentation to the Catholic Biblical Association last August—did not intend to condemn anyone's practice so much as to suggest ways of thinking that might point out a direction for a discipline that in one sense prospers but in another sense languishes. I should clarify that I am not recommending typology and allegory as such, but ask whether these modes might find contemporary equivalents; as Father Murphy observes, a concern for "actualization" is one way of posing the same concern. Father Murphy is perhaps more sanguine than I am about a direct line running from historical criticism to spiritual insight, but it is always good for some of us to be optimistic.

LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON

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THE FIVE LAST WORDS

Francis E. Moore

Wouldn't it be great if the home movies of the fifties and sixties had a sound track in addition to the pictures? But even without the sound, it is still fun to review those old movies with our kids, now grown into their forties.

Our eight kids were forever dreaming up parades and processions that I filmed. In the beginning, Patricia, the oldest, was the one leading very proper nun-like May processions, and, later, marriage ceremonies. In time Michael, the oldest boy, became the producer of pageants. He assembled the participants, wrote the script, and provided the props. What resulted were lovely tableaux that tell much about the heavily Catholic atmosphere in which our kids were raised.

We were lucky enough to live in a big, old colonial house with six rooms off a center hallway on the first floor, and another five rooms upstairs. So we had lots of room for parades around the house. The Christmas Eve event was the most colorful. The strongest child was usually the donkey that bore the Virgin Mary, the youngest daughter, from door to door down the center hall of the house. Michael was Joseph, knocking on each door seeking shelter for the night. Tom and Frank were shepherds. Behind the doors, Mom and I, and a house guest or two, were the innkeepers, having no room at the inn. The movies of this annual event invariably show Michael banging his hand down in frustration at being turned down. You can see him saying "Darn," but only if you know that that is what he said. Eventually, the holy couple found a stable—our living room—where they would put the baby Jesus in a crib that I had erected.

Another home movie shows a memorable burial ceremony for a black-and-white guinea pig that had died. All of the kids wore something black and proceeded, single-file, down the driveway to the back of the barn where a grave had been dug for the deceased. The youngest child carried a piece of wood on which was painted "Here Lies Micky." Sound would not improve this film sequence, because it was conducted entirely in silence, as befits a proper funeral.

One of the most poignant films is of the Passion play that Michael, then ten, put on with the aid of his brother, Tommy, nine, who portrayed Jesus. Patricia was Mary. The children sawed up some old boards they found beneath the barn and nailed them together in a rough semblance of a cross, about six-feet-high with a four-foot crossbar. Tom was to carry this rude cross in the procession, but first he had to don proper attire—jockey shorts and an old sheet. Michael had made a "crown of thorns" by cutting up a rose bush. In addition, Michael had painted a rough picture of Jesus on a piece of old sheeting. This was, of course, to be used by Veronica to wipe the face of Jesus.

With me filming, the procession wound its way from the kitchen, through the dining room, then the den, and finally the living room. Along the way, using a piece of clothesline, Michael gently, but historically correctly, flogged Tommy. We paused in the center hall for Veronica to wipe Tommy's face. In the living room, Michael put the crown of real thorns on Tommy's head, then proceeded to pretend to nail Tommy to the cross. Then we all knelt down and prayed.

The reason I wish that we had had a sound track for that particular scene is that we would be able to hear what Michael said as he put the crown on his brother's head. As Michael screwed the crown down, some thorns bit into Tommy's brow. In the movie you can see Tommy wincing and saying something. But what you can't hear is Michael's chastising Jesus: "You're not supposed to complain." □

Francis E. Moore *is a retired chemical engineer from Attleboro, Massachusetts.*

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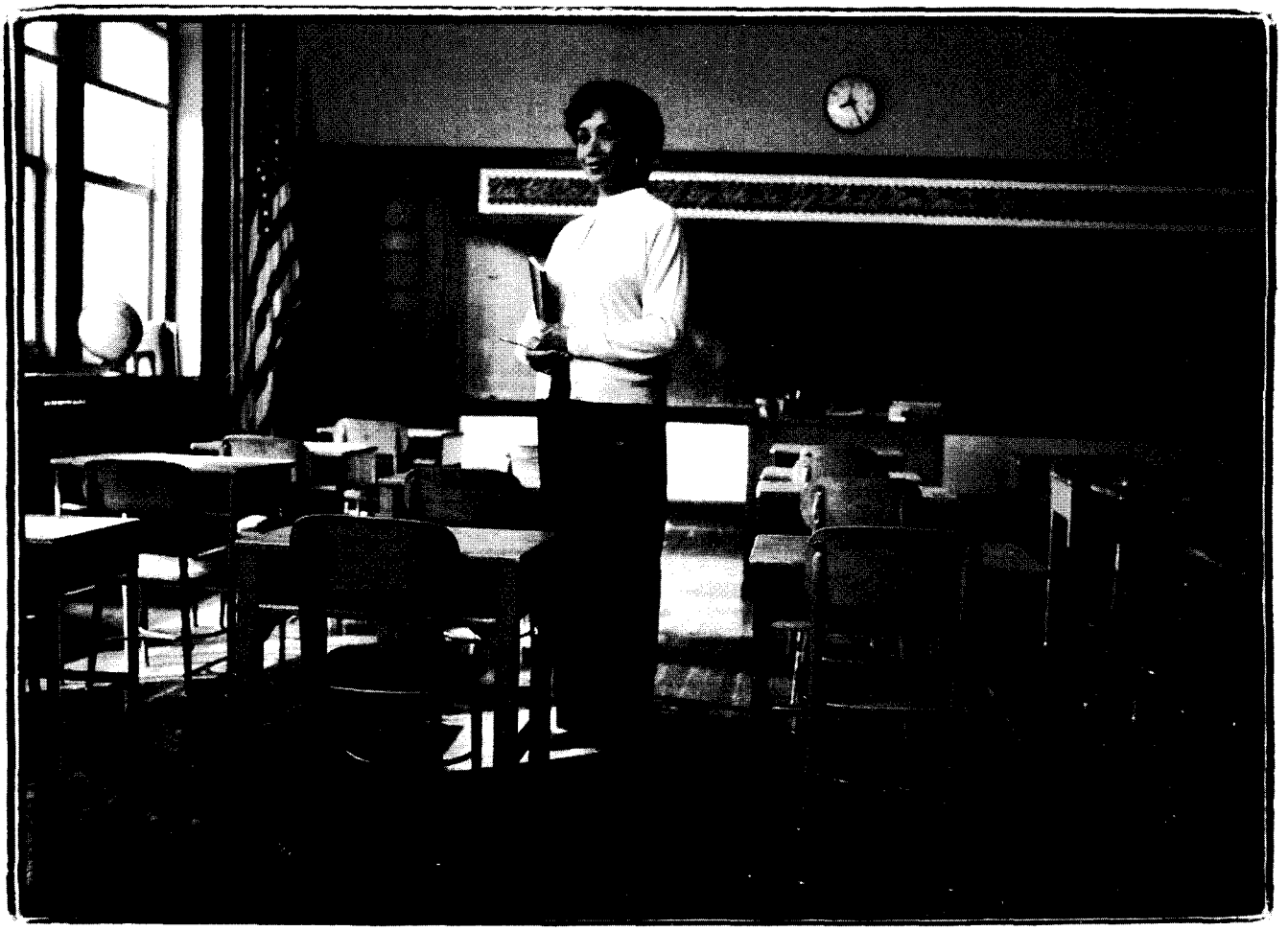

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